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WILD LIFE AMONG THE KOORDS.

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WILD LIFE AMONG THE KOORDS

BY

MAJOR FREDERICK MILLINGEN, F.R.G.S.

AUTHOR OF

'LA TURQUIE SOUS LE RÈGNE D'ABDUL-AZIZ.'

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TO

SIR RODERICK IMPEY MURCHISON, BART.,

K.C.B., F.R.S., Etc.

PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY.

I VENTURE to dedicate to you, Sir, this record of my travels and adventures in those regions of the East which, on account of their historical associations, and the vicissitudes of fortune which they have experienced, are so interesting to mankind in general, in the hope that, from the geographical and ethnological information which it contains, my work may be found in some measure worthy of your patronage.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your faithful Servant,

FREDERICK MILLINGEN.

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PREFACE.

A STRIKING proof of the power exerted over the human mind by historical and religious traditions, is the irresistible attraction which the localities known as having been the scenes of extraordinary events have over our imagination. What can better illustrate this fact than the attraction exerted by Palestine, Egypt, Greece, and Italy on the minds of men from generation to generation? The traditions attached to these countries have been handed down as a valuable inheritance from father to son, and every successive generation has endeavoured to rival that which preceded it by sending forth a series of travellers on perilous journeys, with the view of instituting diligent, and often unrewarded, researches into the present condition and past history of lands so celebrated.

But, besides Italy, Greece, Egypt, and Palestine, where little is left to reward scientific investigations, is there no other country which attracts our attention and deserves our labours? The high plateau of Armenia, Northern Koordistan, is a country which,

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had it no other claim on the world's attention, has unquestionably that of historical priority, being believed to have been twice the cradle of the human race, and subsequently the seat of the Assyrian, Median, and Armenian monarchies.

That Northern Koordistan is the country represented as having been, in the first instance, the cradle of the human race, the Eden of the Bible, is proved by a comparison of the Scriptural text with the topographic features and climate of that region. It is stated, in the second chapter of Genesis, that there was in the Garden of Eden a "river" from which diverged four streams, the Pison, the Gihon, the Hiddekel, and the Euphrates. Of these four streams or rivers three have their source in the mountainous region of Northern Koordistan, the province of Van, and are known in our days by similar names. The Gihon is still called by the Persians the Djihoon-ra-asar, the Araxes of western nations; the Hiddekel is known as the Dedjel, while the Euphrates is denominated the Fratt. As for the Pison, no traces of its existence, or of the course which it pursues, have yet been ascertained.

The existence of these three rivers is a powerful evidence in proof of the identity of this region with the land where the Garden of Eden is stated to have been. Notwithstanding any objection which may be brought to bear against this fact, I am convinced that

the high plateau of Armenia possesses such points of similarity with the description of the Garden of Eden that little or no doubt can be entertained that it must have been the scene of the early events connected with the history of our race recorded in the Book of Genesis. This belief is based on the following considerations. While the plateau formed by Lake Van and its tributaries is endowed with great fertility, and possesses in a high degree the charms of natural beauty, this garden-like territory is surrounded by wastes of relatively sterile soil and sun-burnt plains. The splendid scenery and the exuberant fertility of this region are still as proverbial as they must always have been throughout the East. The belief amongst Turks, Koords, and Christians of all races is that no place on earth can equal this favoured spot, the common saying being "*Duniada Van, khareteh iman*" —In this world Van, in the other Faith.

The second instance in which the high plateau of Armenia is believed to have been the cradle of the human race was after the Deluge. It is related in Genesis that Noah's ark rested on Mount Ararat, from which centre his children spread in all directions over the earth. This scriptural statement is supported by the traditions which exist among the different races of Northern Koordistan. According to these traditions, the ark touched ground at first on the Subhan mountain, which rises above the north-western shore

of Lake Van, but, as Noah could not succeed in effecting a landing there, he remained seven days more within the ark, till it rested at last on Ararat, where he and his family made their exit from it. The Scriptures are thus in harmony with tradition to prove that this part of Asia was the cradle of the human race after the diluvian catastrophe.

This summary reference to the geography and history of this region is intended to convey to the reader a general view of the subject which the contents of the work will develop in its details. In my work, "La Turquie sous le Règne d'Abdul-Aziz," published in 1868, I was compelled to sacrifice, in a great measure, geographical and ethnological questions to paramount political interests. The highly flattering testimonial,* however, which Sir Roderick Murchison, President of the Royal Geographical Society, granted to this work on account of the geographical and ethnological details which might be gleaned from its contents, has encouraged me to undertake the present publication, trusting that, through my exertions, a gleam of light may be thrown on the present condition of that portion of the globe which was at one time the seat of mighty empires, but is now sunk under the weight of ignorance and barbarism.

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* See address at the meeting of the Royal Geographical Society, 25th May, 1868. Millingen's "Observations on Armenia and Koordistan."

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WILD LIFE AMONG THE KOORDS.

CHAPTER I.

Travelling Preparations—Beheram Agha—Departure from Erzerum—The Kiunbet—Deveh-boinu—The Valley of Passin—Travelling Method for Ladies—Supposed Genoese Ruins—Ertef—Eïubler—Our Halting-place.

HAVING been appointed by an Imperial firman to the command of the troops stationed in Koordistan, I hastened to leave Constantinople, and after nine days' voyage I entered Erzerum, then the headquarters of the army of Anatolia. My stay in Erzerum was but of short duration. Official visits to the commander-in-chief and to the small and big pashas forming part of the staff, some affairs connected with the administration of my troops, all having been settled in five or six days, I set to prepare myself for the journey to Van.

In a country where everything is wanting, everything must be provided for; the smallest details must be taken into calculation, otherwise the traveller is sure of finding himself in a helpless position in the

midst of a wilderness. Having travelled through many of the European as well as of the Asiatic provinces of Turkey, I knew pretty well what were the measures to be taken in such an emergency, and what might be required in a long and tedious journey through valleys and mountains where the poor traveller, face to face with the majesty of creation, finds himself the only representative of the human species. However, the present journey to Van was something exceptional, even in the Turkish sense of travelling, so that I thought it prudent not to neglect anything which might be requisite to face the exigencies, and to meet the difficulties, of the journey.

The reports that reached me from all quarters concerning the state of the country through which my route lay, were far from being reassuring. The good-natured shopkeepers in the bazaar of Erzerum were making ample comments on the length and dreariness of the journey, while the recklessness and fierce disposition of the Koordish tribes were cautiously hinted at. They all, however, agreed in praising Van and its neighbourhood to the skies, expatiating with emphasis on the loveliness of its climate, and comparing it to the promised land for the abundance of its productions and the beauty of its gardens. These and other accounts, while exciting my curiosity, served as a stimulus to my departure, by getting me on horseback a moment sooner.

There are two methods to be followed in under-

taking a journey through Turkey; one is by buying the number of horses which may be required for your own use, so that, independent of caravans and drivers, you may be at liberty to go as you like, and stop wherever it may suit your convenience to do so. This is by far the easiest way of travelling, though not always the cheapest. As a rule, this plan may be adopted when the general value of the horses in the place whence one starts is inferior to the price of horses in the country whither one is going. In such a case, provided one knows how to make his bargain, it is easy to make the journey at less expense, and even to profit by the transaction, in pocketing the difference. People well acquainted with the country often have recourse to this expedient. The mode which remains is that of entering into an arrangement with the Katerdjis, a kind of drivers, who take upon themselves to furnish you with as many horses as you may require, and to carry you and your luggage to the place of destination. In these contracts the prices vary from seventeen to twenty-five shillings, that is, from ninety to one hundred and fifty piastres for each horse going from Erzerum to Van. If the journey is to be performed by short stages, during which the drivers are allowed to make their horses graze along the road, then seventeen shillings is the ordinary charge. If, however, the traveller wishes to get through his

journey quickly, going at the rate of twenty or twenty-five miles a day, he must pay twenty-five shillings as an indemnification for the extra expense which the drivers incur by feeding their horses with barley and straw. In the circumstances in which I was placed, I thought the best plan would be that of hiring the number of horses required at the rate of twenty-five shillings, without venturing into any speculation. Besides, according to all probabilities, a jobbing of that sort would almost surely have ended to my disadvantage, as horses are considered to be much cheaper and of a better sort at Van than they generally are in Erzerum.

To find the Katerdjis and to make with them the bargain was an affair soon brought to a conclusion. I took care, however, to select the horses and pack-saddles which seemed to be in the best condition; seven horses, three for myself and my servants and four as pack-horses for my furniture, luggage, and other *impedimenta*, were required. Half of the money agreed to was paid on account, the remainder to be paid on our arrival at Van. This is a necessary precaution, which it is always better to take in order to insure the good behaviour and fidelity of these fellows, while a good stout horsewhip ought to be brought to bear on the scale for the purpose of enforcing order and discipline amongst the recalcitrant elements which often form part of the caravan. That instrument of

coercion constituted, as a matter of course, a part of my accoutrement.

These matters once arranged and the departure having been fixed for the next morning, I went towards the market-place, where I intended to make several purchases to complete my stock of provisions and outfit. After having been in one or two shops my stock of provisions soon attained bulky proportions, as I laid in a pretty good supply of sugar, coffee, chocolate, the well known French sardines in tin boxes, and dry and preserved meat. Candles, soap, and a plentiful supply of lucifer boxes were likewise added to the commissariat stock. I then directed my steps towards that part of the bazaar where are to be found the articles of general outfit, and I bought there some nails and shoes for the horses, as it is a matter of prudence to be always provided with such materials. I selected likewise a nice suit of plate, consisting of a lot of thick wooden spoons and a big leather bag, which while serving as a recipient for all kinds of articles connected with the table, is employed at the same time as a first-rate table cloth, being stretched on the ground at dinner time.

All these once provided, I was about to return to my quarters, when it came into my mind to go and smoke a pipe at the chambers of a certain Hamza Agha, a wealthy merchant from Rizeh, who was established in one of the khans close to the bazaar. Enter-

ing the large wide-open gates of the bazaar I saw my friend Hamza quietly seated before the door of his chamber. On my approach the good tradesman rose politely, and took me into his counting-house, where we crossed our legs opposite to each other on the carpet, and opened the conversation by the usual selams. The first tidings I brought to the knowledge of the tradesman was that of my departure on the following morning. This, as natural, led to several remarks and observations on the part of my interlocutor, who, after having wished me a happy and prosperous journey, told me that he had just happened to see one of his countrymen, one Beheram Agha, who was likewise on the point of leaving for Van. He added that if I wished he might easily bring me into connexion with him, as it would be desirable for both parties to undertake the journey together. I acceded eagerly to the proposal, and Hamza, rising from his place, hastened in search of his friend, whom he thought he might easily find at that very moment in the bazaar. Accordingly, after a not very long interval Hamza was back, followed by a somewhat dark gentlemanly-looking person, whose slightly grey beard indicated him to be a man over forty. This man was Beheram Agha, who on taking his seat soon explained how, having been named director of the government salt monopoly at Van, he was on the point of going to that city in order to be installed into his new

functions. I expressed to the Agha the pleasure that I felt in finding that we were bound for the same destination, and that I should consider it a great advantage if we could make our arrangements in such a way as to start off on our journey together. Beheram showed himself eager to accept my offer, and said that he was quite ready to start on the following morning; but that as he had his harem with him, he did not know whether I should object to travel in their society. This piece of information at first, I must confess, startled me, and threw a kind of gloom over my prospects. Whatever may be my predilection for, and devotion to, the fair sex, I have always been of opinion that, invaluable in the domestic recess, women are not quite the sort of companions which one would like to have while en route. Besides this, it seemed to me that with a Turkish harem the matter was worse still, because with European ladies one may easily jump over ditches and fences, especially if they have been trained in Rotten-row, but with a lot of Turkish women matters are more serious. And what if the jealous husband, under the smallest pretence, were to experience a fit of violent jealousy, out of which any amount of dramas and tragedies might arise? Notwithstanding all these ideas that naturally enough occurred to me, I made up my mind, and told Beheram that any amount of women that he might carry with him would not the least

affect me, on the contrary I should be most happy to offer them my assistance and protection. This was, I thought, making the best of a bad bargain; but experience soon showed me that I was mistaken in my apprehensions, as the poor ladies behaved admirably during the whole of the journey, and for any kindness I may have shown them they amply repaid me by their attentions and cordiality. As for Beheram's jealousy, I succeeded at last in overcoming it.

The hour of our departure was fixed for five o'clock in the morning, as we wished to profit by the freshness of the early hours so as to reach our first resting-place in good time. The Gumush-Kiunbet, a monument which stands on the road a few hundred yards out of the town, was the spot which was selected as the point of rendezvous for the party. These general arrangements once settled, we took leave of the good Hamza, and directed ourselves to our respective lodgings, in order to get ready for the morning.

No sooner had the dawn appeared than trunks and men were all on horseback, while the animals began to carry us out of the sulky-looking and miserable streets of the capital of Asiatic Turkey. We emerged at once into the burial-ground, at the other extremity of which we could see the Gumush-Kiunbet, of which the characteristic and picturesque dome, though a ruin itself, seems to look with satisfaction on the surrounding tombs of prostrate and fallen humanity.

Arrived at the Kiunbet, as we saw no trace of Beheram and his *houris*, I thought it advisable to wait there awhile, profiting in the meantime by the delay in order to satisfy my archæological taste by examining the old monument. This building, the Turkish name of which signifies the silver cupola, seems from its structure to belong to the epoch in which Erzerum was the capital of the Kara-koiunlu and Ak-koiunlu dynasties of the Turkmens—viz., the 12th century. This isolated monument, of a pentagonal form, has an elevation of thirty-five feet, and is constructed of solid and well cut stone, its corners being decorated with slender columns of the Arabic style. A door, bearing no inscription, leads into the interior, while two good-sized windows serve to throw light inside the building. A pyramidical dome, surmounted by something resembling a pine-apple, crowns the edifice. During the occupation of Erzerum (1829) by the Russian army, under Paskiewitch, this building served as a *corps de garde*, in order to overlook the roads of the surrounding country; now the more peaceable Turks use it as a kind of coffee-house.

While I was thus contemplating the old Kiunbet, and looking at the surrounding hills, my servants perceived several horsemen coming towards us, and announced them to me as likely to be Beheram's party. Not being able, however, to distinguish any feminine forms amongst the company, I began to

doubt its identity with that of our fellow-travellers; and it was not till Beheram himself, hastening the pace of his steed, rode close to the spot where we were, that I could recognise the approaching party.

On arriving close to us Beheram made the customary salute, and asked whether we had met with his harem, as it was some time since they had started on their way. On receiving a negative answer from me, he said that we should not be long in overtaking the ladies, as it was not more than an hour since they had left. Beheram, myself, and our followers then put spurs to our horses, and, following the high road, began to wind about the ridges which form the eastern boundary of the plateau of Erzerum. Aridity and a dreary appearance are the characteristics of the surrounding scenery. No trees, nor even shrubs, were to be detected in the midst of the heaps of stone and in the calcareous soil through which our road lay. That fresh and brisk air which invariably smiles on the faces of travellers while getting through the first hours of their journey, made up to a great extent for the tediousness of the road; while pipes and cigarettes served to keep up the amenity of our conversation. Some remarks upon the quadrupeds that were carrying us on their backs, some observations about our costumes and accoutrements, one or two bits of information concerning Erzerum, seasoned by sarcasms and criti-

cisms on its inhabitants, were the subjects which entertained me and the good-natured Beheram while our horses were keeping step, side by side. We thus soon reached the top of the ridge, from which, while losing sight of the plain of Erzerum, we beheld the valley of Passin from one extremity to the other.

This high ridge, which is of a curvilinear form, is called by the Turks Deveh-boinu, or the Camel's Neck, on account of its configuration. Strategically, it is a very important point, because if the Turkish forces were to lose ground at Kars, this is the only place where they could effectually make a stand against the invader. It is on this position that the contending armies must decide who is to be the master of Erzerum. The loss of Deveh-boinu would have for consequence the evacuation of that city. During the late war the Turkish army occupied this position, and strengthened it by the construction of extensive field-works. From a tactical point of view, the position is essentially defensive; unapproachable on the left flank, it can only with difficulty be attacked from the positions dominating its right flank. As the road coming from Erzerum, the line of retreat of the Turks, passes by the right flank of the position, the strategic reason also leads to the conclusion that this point would be the one which the Russians would select in executing their attack. Deveh-Boinu is an in-

hospitable and dreary spot where no human being has ever attempted to live. In winter time the violence of the wind and the intensity of cold are such that Erzerum with its 22 degrees Centigrade (equal to 9° Fahr. below zero) of frost is considered a place of refuge. Travellers and caravans dread the very name of Deveh-Boinu. This point is at a distance of seven miles from Erzerum.

While intent on my observations I was reconnoitring the environs, Beheram and the others saw at a distance the caravan composed of his female household. They attracted my attention to that point, and Beheram told me that he would despatch to them one of his servants to tell them to stop and wait for us near the stream which runs at the foot of the descent, where we might take a little rest. We therefore continued to descend the easy slope which is followed by the road, and after having gone through the distance of three miles we came to the small rivulet which bisects the way, so that our caravan found itself mustered all on one halting spot. On approaching, and while in the act of alighting from the horse, I cautiously turned my face in the direction which was diametrically opposed to the spot where the harem was standing. I soon perceived, however, that such delicate behaviour was utterly uncalled for, as the members of the harem were invisible, being concealed behind the screen of their taberna-

culum. In order to make my readers understand what the word tabernaculum here means it is necessary to give a description of the contrivances which are employed by the Turks in order to transport their wives and families from one extremity of the empire to the other.

One way of travelling for ladies is that of seating themselves comfortably inside a takhtaravan, which is a kind of *chaise-à-porteurs* or sedan, carried by two mules, one in front and the other behind. This method of undertaking a journey is very expensive, so that it only falls to the lot of the harems of rich pashas to indulge in such a luxury. The other plan is that of riding inside a machine called the maghfeh, which consists of two rather large and flat boxes tied on to the sides of a pack-saddle. Small mattresses and cushions being arranged in the inside, the two compartments form but one snuggish berth, where two women can make themselves comfortable provided they sit all the while with their legs crossed. The whole of this concern is covered up with white calico, having thus the appearance of a small tent with an arched roof perched on the back of a horse. The travelling ladies have no other way of entering and quitting their berth but by climbing up and down the neck of the quadruped to whose care their lives are entrusted. The horse carrying the maghfeh is, as a measure of precaution, led by a special guide known

under the name of Hekiam. The skill displayed by these fellows is not of an ordinary character, as notwithstanding the difficulty of carrying women and children with such primitive and clumsy apparatus along the edges of precipices and across streams and rivers, they seldom happen to meet with disasters.

After we had taken our seats at a certain distance from the spot where the harem had stopped, the ladies dropped themselves down from their berths, selected a place out of sight of profane regards, and quietly seated themselves on the border of a ditch. An hour was spent by us on this spot, our chief occupation being that of smoking a cigarette or two, accompanied by a cup of coffee, which Turkish servants know how to boil and prepare even in the midst of a desert. They really have the wonderful talent of presenting a cup of coffee *improvisé*. My servant Reshid, a Circassian slave by origin, was a most clever hand for all those kind of things. Having been a chief man in the household of a pasha, he possessed all the accomplishments and the arrogance which can be traced in his kind, even amongst English butlers. Shrewdness and sharpness were, however, his redeeming points.

The time came to resume our journey. Every one having got into the saddle, and the women having been helped in performing their ascent to their perches, the caravan began to move on. It was our turn this time to take the lead, so that, leaving the two magh-

fehs with their guides and the luggage behind us, we rode on. Our caravan was now pretty numerous, masters, servants, and attendants mustering some fourteen men. Beheram's harem was composed of his wife, his daughter, and two slaves. Our route lay now on the plain, and skirted the hills forming the southern boundary of the valley of Passin. From this point branch off the two roads which lead, the one to Kars, the other to Van and Mush. In this neighbourhood the valley of Passin does not offer any remarkable feature, or anything worth noting, except two villages and several farms, which stand afar from the road in the centre of the plain. As we approached, however, the village of Ertef, the fort of Hassan-kaleh showed itself conspicuously on our right. This fort stands upon a spur of the mountain range which surrounds the northern extremity of the plain of Passin. The little town of Hassan-kaleh is situated at the foot of the mountain, and is defended by an old embattled wall in a state of ruin. According to the chronicles which one hears repeated by the peasants of the country and by all the natives, the fort of Hassan-kaleh is a Genoese ruin. Nothing could be more erroneous than such a notion. All throughout the East it is really a mania to attribute the existence of two stones one over the other to the Genoese. This universally spread idea can only be attributed to two causes: first, the complete ignorance of the Turks

about history, which would show them that the power of the Genoese never advanced so far into Asia; secondly, the circumstance that this tradition arose from the fact that many of the forts conquered by the Turks on the Black Sea and in the Mediterranean having belonged once to the Genoese, the ignorant conquerors and their less instructed subjects throughout the East remain under the impression that any fort they see, even if it be the walls of China, belongs to the Genoese epoch. This erroneous notion of the natives is a regular nuisance; if one happens to be anxious enough to venture into any inquiry, the answer will invariably be *Genoese zemanindan*—viz., from the time of the Genoese.

I consider it almost a duty to rectify here, *à propos* of Hassan-kaleh, this generally accepted error, as many intelligent travellers have often been misled by this sort of statement, which they have not hesitated to insert in their diaries.

A little after mid-day we reached Ertef, a little Armenian village situated at the entrance of a narrow valley which penetrates into the mountains we were to ascend before the night. Ertef has in itself nothing worth notice; the ten or twenty houses which constitute it a village obtaining such importance as they have from the mere fact that they are the last buildings deserving the name of houses to be met with till the traveller gets to Van. This spot may therefore be

considered as the boundary between Turkish refinement and Koordish barbarity. These houses have a decent appearance externally, while the interior is wide, airy, and clean. The only place through which light is admitted into the rooms is by a hole in the middle of the ceiling. This architectural disposition is Koordish rather than Turkish, and is to be met with everywhere throughout the country except in the large towns. Ertef being at a distance of six hours from Erzerum, this point was considered to mark the half of our journey for that day. The halt that we made here was but a short one. After having allowed a little breathing time to our horses, and refreshed ourselves with an abundant mixture of sour milk and garlic, called by the natives *ayran*, we began to climb the steep ascent that was rising before us. All along as far as Ertef, we had the advantage of following a kind of road, which the Turks are simple enough to call a postal road. Here, however, we lost such a boon, as from this point the road was nothing but a mere track winding up the steep ascent to the highlands, and often skirting the verges of deep and dangerous ravines.

The scenery all around had likewise completely changed. Instead of the monotonous landscape of dry and burnt up appearance, which characterizes the valley of Passin, in the highlands are verdant bushes, interspersed every now and then with dwarf trees,

scattered oases of green turf, watered by a widely-spread stream. A cool breeze refreshed the air, and all the elements seemed to undergo a marked change, and assume a different aspect.

After having accomplished a succession of more or less steep ascents and descents, we came in sight of a wretched little village named Eiubler, which, being an agglomeration of genuine Koordish hovels, could only be perceived within a range of a few yards. The notables and populace of the village, *i.e.*, four or five shabby-looking fellows and some ten or twelve little boys, presented themselves in a body in order to greet me with a happy welcome, and offer the tribute of hospitality. My uniform, and the many followers in our train, led them to believe that I was something greater than I actually was—a pasha with several tails. The military are always a good deal thought of by the Koords, who, like all warlike people, attach little importance to those who are not armed with the sword of justice.

My first intimation to the fellows who had come to greet me with their low bows, was that they should, at a few moments' notice, put at our disposal the best houses they possessed, one of them to be occupied by Beheram's harem, and the other one by myself and servants. While this order was on the point of being put into execution, and the poor peasants were doing their best in order to make their hovels appear clean

and nice, the whole of our caravan waited on a species of esplanade which spreads itself in front of the village. Here the houses did not seem to differ much from the dens which wolves and bears might select for their abode. The exterior of a Koordish house may be described in a few words as consisting of two small walls, or rather heaps of stones, serving as supports to a shabby little door, surmounted by a roof formed of a heap of earth and dust.

The hour being rather advanced, and the atmosphere sharp and piercing in this high region, we hastened to take shelter in the interior of those abodes whose classic architecture I had been admiring with a really artistic predilection. The chill drove us all in, however; and I was not sorry to get indoors, where a meal and a couch would make us forget the difficulties of the ten hours' journey we had achieved. From Ertef our road had been very steep and trying, as we had climbed up an ascent of four hours' length. This chain of mountains, which separates the basin of the Araxes from the valley of Passin, must be between three and four thousand feet above the Araxes, and is known by the name of the Tek-Dagh. Beheram Agha had taken leave of me, as he intended to spend the night in the society of his family, whom he must have found rather exhausted after the trials they had undergone during their toilsome march. My meal that night was served in a sumptuous style, as I had hot and

cold dishes brought before me. The notables of the village had already received the intimation that they were to provide us with a nice pilaf and two fowls. The poor fellows being not rich enough to provide themselves with rice, had nothing else to offer us but a pilaf made with wheat, beaten up in a mortar. This is the sort of pilaf which is used by the people all throughout Koordistan. When well prepared it is by no means a distasteful dish. The fowls, however, were prepared in a fashion rather too primitive and original. It would have defied even the wit of a Baron de Brisse, the celebrated French gastronomer, to guess what they were on their first appearance on the table. They were undressed to such a point, that their very skins had been taken off them. I really couldn't make out at first to what species of the fauna family they belonged, although their forms revealed clearly enough that they were genuine fowls. To clear all doubts, I asked the people of the village, who were attending my levee in a respectful posture, if I was mistaken or not in regard to these animals, as the fowls I knew all wore a skin, and these had none left. One of the notables, whose wife had very likely prepared the dinner, assured me that his fowls had all had a skin upon their backs, but as he was afraid that I should not have found them clean enough, he had thought it judicious to purify them thoroughly by entirely

stripping them of their cuticles. Vexed at finding my appetite sadly baffled, and scarcely capable of keeping myself from laughing at the simplicity of these Koords, I warned them not to be so foolish for the future, because, though every one likes cleanliness, there are not many who would sacrifice the skin of a fowl in order to eat the remainder in a cleaner but hard and tough condition. While thus rather annoyed, I was endeavouring to make the best of a bad dinner by indulging in the pilaf and the provisions I had brought with me, the son of Beheram made his appearance, holding in his hands a plate of sweet cakes made with honey. This was put on the table with the harem's compliments, the ladies requesting me to accept it as a mark of attention which fellow-travellers owe to each other. I expressed my thanks to the young fellow, and told him that I felt the delicacy of this attention the more, as it happened very opportunely to complement the deficiency in my dinner.

Soon after dinner I lay down to rest. My couch was a very comfortable one, as I had my own bed, with all its accessories, stretched on the floor upon a Koordish felt carpet. However, all these precautions in order to insure a night's rest were of little avail. On the whole, I do not suppose I was able to take two or three hours' sound sleep. Visitors of all sorts and denominations came to inquire after me, without having any consideration for the state of fatigue in

which a traveller must be. Not satisfied with merely inquiring after me, these troublesome guests literally invaded my couch from every side, and began freely to walk all about my legs, arms, and face. In vain did I shout for rescue to my servants, who were in just as helpless a state as myself. In short, the whole of the night was spent in hunting up, candle in hand, the most antediluvian reptiles and insects, which probably do not figure amongst the specimens in the Natural History department of the British Museum.

With the dawn we were all up, our first care being that of making a hearty breakfast with milk and cream, so as to compensate for the loss of rest we had undergone during the night. The horses and our luggage having been made ready, we all started, bidding a hearty farewell to the miserable village that had offered us the night's shelter. As is the custom in Koordistan, the notables accompanied the party out of the village, walking solemnly before my horse, to show the way and make their last selams to me. I soon dismissed them, conveying to them at the same time my thanks, joined to a substantial *bakhshish* of a few shillings, which for those people must have been a princely gift. It is not often that these peasants get any *bakhshish* of the kind; the travellers passing by seldom giving them anything, on the principle, very likely, that they would get spoiled by such gifts, and lose their primitive simplicity of manners.

CHAPTER II.

Route to Kullee—Panorama of the Valley of the Araxes—Koordish Mourning—The Chief of the Village—Interior of a Koordish House—Passage of the Araxes—A Koordish Caravan—Country on the other side of the Araxes.

THE road leading from Eiubler to Kullee is a continuation of the steep ascent which has its beginning at Ertef. On leaving Eiubler the path skirts some high ridges bordering a deep long ravine which runs perpendicularly to the basin of the Araxes. After an hour's march our road took a more southerly direction—that is to say, to our right, and reached the culminant point of the chain of the Tek mountains. From the moment of our departure the weather had been anything but favourable. Though on the whole the sky had been clear, a violent and cutting wind had unrelentingly opposed the march of our caravan. The gusts of wind, mixed with spouts of rain and hail, were at intervals so violent that the poor women with their maghfehs were compelled to take shelter anywhere they could. Fearing that some dreadful accident might occur, I and my men kept close to the harem, so as to render assistance in case of emergency. It is to me still an object of wonder how

Beheram's family could safely traverse those difficult passes in spite of the violent storm which they had to brave. The maghfehs, with all their calicos, riggings, and inmates, had truly a miraculous escape. What would have been their fate if the horse had stumbled, or if, pushed by the wind, the poor beast had lost his balance by a false movement! *Dieu protége les femmes*, it seems; that is the only explanation that can possibly be given.

On the summit of the chain we found several small plateaux intersected by rocks, and covered with turf and bushes. One of these rocks, somewhat in the shape of an amphitheatre, seemed to me a very suitable spot, where we might laugh at the wind while making our halt. As we had been almost four hours in performing a journey which we ought to have achieved in a couple of hours, we resolved upon making a regular halt behind these stones, limiting our route for that day to Kullee, which is at a distance only of two hours from that spot. As soon as we had rested a little, while our horses were grazing, we began with common accord to prepare our luncheon.

The party presented the picture of a picnic *en famille*. Under the exceptional circumstances in which we were, the barriers between the harem and ourselves had naturally been removed, Beheram's family having been obliged to select their seats in our proximity. *A la guerre comme à la guerre*, says the old French pro-

verb, and poor Beheram, notwithstanding the objection which he seemed to entertain for a picnic of the sort, could not easily find the way to get out of it, and was therefore compelled to give his assent. As for myself, I rejoiced in my luck at having hit on the expedient most suitable for coming into contact with female society. I had thus an opportunity of seeing the four persons forming Beheram's harem. His wife was a woman in the thirty-eighth or fortieth year of her age, and judging from appearances she must once have been a nice and interesting person. Beheram seems to have been a model of a man, as he had never felt tempted to have more than one wife. A young girl of seventeen or eighteen in the bloom of youth and beauty sat near Beheram's wife; that was his daughter. A mixture of Georgian and Laz blood rendered her a real beauty. She was, however, shy and untamed, though by her movements it could be perceived that she was conscious of her own charms. The two other females were domestics, one of them a slave; she seemed a lively and animated girl. The conversation was of course confined to myself, Beheram, and his son, though at intervals I ventured to say something to the ladies. This did not seem however to be quite suited to Beheram's taste, as I often remarked that his countenance was turning rather sour. Mussulman jealousy is very slippery ground, so that I could only venture

to throw some cautious glances every now and then towards an object whose charms would have excited the admiration of any of Adam's children besides myself.

Having but a short journey to perform in order to reach Kullee, we prolonged our stay for two or three hours, during which the wind had been losing a good deal of its former strength. We therefore proceeded slowly on, following the steep descent which ends in the plain of the Araxes. This descent is much shorter, and consequently much steeper, than the ascent on the other side of the mountain. Its declivity must be of 48 or 55 degrees, so that in many places we were obliged to rescue ourselves from danger and spare our poor horses by walking and leading them by the bridle. From this point the basin of the Araxes presents a panorama imposing and grand in its features. On the south the eye meets with the mass of a lofty range whose deep azure tints are brought out with striking effect by the light blue of the surrounding atmosphere. The stream of the river seems as if it was emerging from the foot of these mountains which divide the valley of the Araxes from the fertile plains of Mush. Towards the east, in the direction we were following, rises a chain of mountains whose spurs, through a variety of undulations, gradually descend to the banks of that historic river. High rocky mountains ending in precipices close the

view on the left. The barren and reddish tint of this side of the landscape offers a strange contrast with the appearance of the mountains on the other. The Araxes flows in the middle, its yellow-coloured waters running rapidly from south to north through steep embankments and marshy plains. The whole of this panorama is however solemn and dreary in its majesty. Not a town, not a village, is there to testify to the existence of animated nature. The few hovels which constitute the village of Kullee are the only signs of an inhabited spot which the eye of the traveller can discover throughout the whole extent of this panorama.

While thus descending, we had a bird's-eye view of the village of Kullee, whose appearance is more like that of a heap of ruins than of an inhabited spot. A vast cemetery, formed of large hewn stones, stretches from the northern extremity of the village, along the slope of the adjacent range. We had come within sight of the little hovels which give to Kullee the right to be called a village, when some wild shrieks and shoutings, resembling more the squeals of jackals than the voices of human beings, attracted our attention that way. To our great astonishment we saw a lot of women and men, some forty or fifty persons, rushing out from a little door, and shouting to the utmost of their force, while some of them were raising their arms to the sky, and others were lowering their heads to the ground. It was impossible for us to guess at the

meaning of this melodramatic performance. The only conclusion myself and Beheram came to was, that some great misfortune must have befallen the inhabitants. Our guides did not leave us long in doubt, as, according to them, those shoutings were the signs of grief with which the Koords lament and weep the death of their kindred. On our arrival this bit of news was fully confirmed, as we were informed that an old man, a patriarch of the tribe, had just breathed his last. It was from his house that the promiscuous crowd had been seen rushing out, like a swarm of bees rushing out of their hive when fire or smoke forced them to abandon it.

Our drivers brought the caravan before a door of rather an imposing appearance, higher and more stylish than those which give entrance to the houses we had been accustomed to meet with. This house was reckoned to be the Mussafir-khaneh, that is, the place where those strangers and travellers are received who may happen to make this village their halting-place. The door excepted, the exterior of the building did not differ from that of all the other houses we could see around us; that is, it consisted of an earthen mound flat on the top, with a door and two small side walls near it. Upon entering I expected to find in the interior some low, dark room, joined to a filthy stable, but to my surprise, a large, well aired, and stately hall presented

itself to my sight. The architecture of this house, and all its arrangements, were in the genuine Koordish style, which was to me quite a novelty. As I have rarely met with a nicer specimen of the kind in other parts of Koordistan, I will select this in order to give a description of the interior of houses in this part of the world.

The building destined for the reception of strangers and of their horses, forms a large square, sixteen metres (fifty-two feet) in length, and fourteen (forty-five and a half feet) broad, its height being about six metres (twenty feet). This square hall is divided in its breadth into two sections, one twenty and the other thirty feet wide. The first section is allotted to the travellers, while the larger one is a stable. These two compartments have no partition between them, save a small wall, something above a yard in height, which serves, at the same time, as a sort of pedestal for the wooden pillars which sustain the ceiling. Thus, the stable and the room form but one and the same apartment, men and beasts breathing promiscuously the same atmosphere.* For a Koord it is the ideal of delight to see all his horses, buffaloes, and cows ruminating before his eyes. The smoke of his pipe has no solace for him if he cannot breathe at the same time the exhalations of the stable. The sitting-room, a fine

* See Xenophon's Anabasis,—description of the houses of the Karducs.

oblong in shape, had a handsome marble chimney-piece situated at the extremity of the room, opposite to the entrance. The design of the chimney-piece, and the flowers and ornaments sculptured upon it, were of the Arabic style, done with some art. On both sides of this room there was a low platform covered with long felt carpets, placed there for the accommodation of the guests. The ceiling was constructed of beams placed horizontally with a certain amount of skill. High up above the chimney-piece, a garret window was the only place from which light could get access to the room. The stable was airy and spacious, and had three rows of troughs for the animals. The row just facing the compartment allotted for the use of human beings, allowed them to trespass beyond their limits by poking their heads into the midst of our circle. At night, this kind of visit must sometimes be not quite agreeable. The ceiling of the stable was made of well-cut beams, superposed one above the other, and gradually rising from the borders to the centre, so as to form a sort of cupola. An orifice in the middle of the ceiling did duty for a window, furnishing the interior of the stable with air and light. On the whole, I must confess, I did not dislike the place at all; and while pleased with its appearance, I began to think that the Koords were not so utterly devoid of taste as might be supposed.

Here at least, while the general disposition of the

building seemed to be admirably suited to the wants and exigencies of their wandering life, they had not neglected to give to their dwelling a comfortable and stately appearance. It is to be understood that the apartment of which I have been giving a description is a *selamlik*, accessible only to strangers, and to the male branch of our species. I will talk of the apartments occupied by the women in the proper place.

While I had been engaged in examining my new quarters in all its details, my servants had gone in search of the chief of the village—a person of note and importance when one has to consider how he is to feed himself and his horses, and in what way he is to ensure a night's good rest to all those who form part of his caravan. Not long after their departure my people came back, bringing to me a stout, strong Koord, whose white beard showed him to be a man close upon sixty, if not more. A *menu* of straw and wheat for our animals, to be followed by another *menu* of pilaf and roast fowl for ourselves, was what I enjoined the old Koord to provide, without even giving him time to finish the obsequious selams he began to perform. Wise from my experience of the preceding night, I did not omit, as one may suppose, warning the old man to take care not to strip the fowls of their skin, as otherwise I should not be able to eat them. Beheram and his family had

been installed in one of the houses where a spacious harem could accommodate him and his female suite.

The Koord, whose name was Omer, showed himself a very quick hand at work, as in about an hour's time he made his appearance carrying a big brass tray, over which he had arranged everything that I had asked him to make ready. "Here it is, my Beg; a grey horse and a young master are the most difficult customers to attend to; I hope I may have satisfied you." These words were addressed to me by old Omer, who seemed to be a very facetious old fellow, fond of a little fun, and of an activity seldom to be met with amongst Orientals. Different from his countrymen, he appeared to know that in the long run one gets more from passengers by running up a bill with a smiling countenance than one can get by highway robbery. His easy and *dégagé* manners pleasing me exceedingly, I asked him to be seated before me while taking my repast, as I wished to have a chat with him about the Koords and his village. "What shall I tell you about the Koords, Beg?" he said. "We are a lot of marauders; to-day we are here, and to-morrow we are God knows where. You see," he added, "scarcely any one is in the village now; all our people and cattle are gone up the highlands in search of cold water and fresh air; what business have we to remain inside these villages? If you had come to-morrow you would not have found me here, I assure you; and the reason of my having remained

behind in the village was the illness of one of our white-bearded ones (elders), who (that God may grant you a long life !) is dead to-day, shortly before you arrived."—" Why," I asked, " did you make that noise and all that shouting when he died? We could hear you at an hour's distance."—" My Beg," replied Omer, bursting out laughing, " didn't I tell you that we are Koords; that's our fashion of mourning; every one shouts away. His wives were weeping because they lost a husband, but they can get another. I shrieked because I have lost some money which I shan't be able to get back. The poor man has not left much behind him. If I don't get it in this, I will get it in the other world." So we went on talking, the old Koord's manner of conversing being original and comic, and well suited to amuse and keep every one lively. All at once, however, Omer got up, and without much ceremony put on his shoes and went off, leaving every one to form his own conjecture as to the reason of his sudden departure. After a short lapse of time, some few minutes perhaps, he came back, holding in his hand a plate of honey, surmounted by a good stock of fresh cream, which he put on the table, recommending me to have some of it. I was much pleased by this mark of attention on his part, and heartily partook of the honey and cream. As the quantity, however, was more than any one could

reasonably attempt to absorb, I thought this a good opportunity to return the attention which Beheram's family had shown towards me on the preceding night.

A little after the table had been cleared, Beheram came to join our circle; as a matter of course he came single, bringing neither his wife nor his daughter with him. I suppose that, while we were holding our circle *en garçon*, the ladies must have found some Koordish women to join their party. Beheram being an addition to the society, we resumed our conversation, of which Koordistan and the Koords was the subject. Beheram began by showing a sort of contempt for all the Koords in a lot. His very looks at the one who was seated near him betrayed the inward feeling of superiority which he considered himself entitled to assume. It is a common case with provincials to regard their respective countries as far superior to all others of which they may hear people talk. As for individual worth, in their own opinion, no one can come up to the standard of a countryman of theirs. This provincial conceit is universally spread in Asia as well as in Europe, so that the Provençal stands to the Breton for what the Laz is to the Koord, or the Scotch to the Irish. Not finding throughout the whole extent of the country we had been traversing, any of the plantations, gardens, and

orchards which are to be met with everywhere in his own country, Beheram naturally enough began to look upon Koordistan as a waste land, and on its inhabitants as a lot of savages of the worst description. The specimen of a Koord which he saw before him was rather a puzzle, because he could not see how wit, acuteness, and intelligence could ever be combined with wild and semi-barbarous notions. The lynx-eyed Koord seemed, however, to detect almost by instinct what was passing in Beheram's mind, and instantly opened a sharp fire on him, by means of which he tried, as well as he could, to show that after all Beheram and his Lazistan had not much to boast of. The controversy sometimes became rather amusing. In one case the Koord, answering to Beheram, said, "The gardens and orchards of which you are boasting, only belong to you as long as the tax-gatherer and the police do not turn you out. With us, the case is different; we have no gardens that can be got hold of. The fields that feed our flocks belong neither to us nor to any police—there they stand as they have stood for two thousand years. Our villages, you may have them; in a week's time we can construct others wherever we like."

More anxious to get information than to hear the two fellows go on with their animated dialogue, I interrupted the conversation by asking Omer whether

he knew when and by whom the building we occupied had been constructed. According to his account, this village had been occupied by his tribe only about thirty years; before that epoch it was inhabited by an Armenian population, who had emigrated into the Russian territories of the Caucasus. The cemetery, which is on the other side of the village, belonged to these Armenians. "They found," added Omer, "that the lands and mountains of the padishah were too narrow for them, so that they left their houses and their dead behind, and followed the army of the Infidels." Omer, who was not well acquainted with epochs and events, intended to allude to the invasion of Asia Minor by Marshal Paskiewitch, in 1829. The Koord was not, however, able to satisfy my curiosity with regard to the construction of the building which was then his property by *droit de conquête*. Evidently the emigration of the former inhabitants brought about the immigration of Omer and his Koords, who made themselves the masters of the abandoned hovels.

As the desire of taking some rest was becoming stronger and stronger, I recommended the old Koord to take care that early in the morning the buffaloes and carts necessary to get us across the Araxes should be ready and in the best condition. I enjoined also that our horses and our breakfast should be prepared as early as possible after sunrise.

This night I succeeded in obtaining rest, notwithstanding the annoyances and tribulations by which the traveller is persecuted throughout Koordistan. The numberless wretches with whom I had become acquainted at Eiubler had, to a great extent, followed our caravan by contriving to find comfortable berths in the midst of our mattresses and quilts; some of them had even the audacity to settle upon our persons and about our linen and dresses. Before going to bed of course the necessary measures were resorted to, thorough researches were made, and all possible precautions were taken to protect ourselves from a renewal of the trials we had undergone on the preceding night. Thanks to all this trouble, my slumber was scarcely ever deranged during that night, so that in the morning I rose as fresh and vigorous as one could possibly wish to be. Up before the rest of the caravan, I had to awake my servants and drivers. The feeding of the horses, their grooming, and the packing of our luggage being achieved, nothing else was left but our breakfasting. This duty, too, was soon performed, thanks to the services of Omer. So at the appointed hour mine as well as Beheram's party were all in marching order, crossing the low marshy plain which stretches itself from the village to the Araxes. Omer, instead of taking leave of me in the village, accompanied the party to the spot where the ferry-carts were waiting. I was glad

to see him present in order to preside over the operation.

The Araxes was in the midst of the plain; its distance from Kullee may be reckoned about a thousand yards. The road, which passes through low fields, is marshy in some places, and covered with weeds and reeds. On reaching the banks of the Araxes, we found the drivers with their buffaloes and carts waiting. The Araxes rather disappointed, I must confess, my expectations. The generality of readers may very likely not be aware that the Araxes is believed by many to be the Gihon mentioned in Genesis, one of the four streams which had their source in the garden of Eden—the terrestrial Paradise. Although the name by which this river is known to Western nations has no affinity with the Scriptural one, the name of Djehoon-ra-Asar given to it by the Persians fully confirms the opinion that throughout the East this river was called the Gihon, or Djehoon. My surprise and disappointment may, therefore, be easily understood when, instead of finding a mighty river whose waters were diffusing over the adjacent country the blessings of a Paradise, I saw before me a violent and boisterous stream, scarcely a hundred yards wide. However, the rapidity of its current, the tumultuous rush of its waters, the devastations and ravages which are visible on both sides of the Araxes, bear witness that the insignificant-

looking river which I saw asserts sometimes its celebrity by overflowing the adjacent lands.

In the course of my travels many are the rivers which I have had to cross. The difficulties of all of them have, in some way or other, been overcome, though the methods employed for crossing them seem to vary with almost every country and race. On the Araxes the Koords have the incontestible right to claim a patent as inventors of a new system of crossing rivers by means of swimming carts. The sight of these ferry-boats was far from being reassuring, as it seemed almost impossible that so heavy and clumsy-looking vehicles could ever remain afloat, much less convey us and our luggage safe to the other side of the Araxes. In order not to neglect any measure of precaution, I proposed that our party should undertake the passage a few at a time, and that the luggage should be left to the last, after every one had been carried safely over. The old Omer, however, upset all these plans of mine. Not satisfied with loading the carts with the luggage, he actually invited us to take our seats on the top of the cargo, otherwise he said he would not insure that we should get dry and safe to the opposite shore. Accordingly, the first two expeditions set out carrying Beheram and his harem. Beheram, as a good paterfamilias, had taken his place near his beloved consort and lovely daughter, ready to pick them up in case

they should have the misfortune to measure the depth of the Araxes. At first, while the buffaloes were quietly advancing, all seemed to go on quite well, but as the conveyances got further into the middle of the stream affairs took an alarming aspect. Buffaloes and carts began by degrees to disappear, the only objects which could still be seen afloat being the noses and horns of the swimming quadrupeds. Our fellow-travellers, terror-struck at seeing the rising flood threaten them with submersion, were shrieking to the utmost of their power, while endeavouring to climb on the top of the trunks and luggage. Fortunately, the buffaloes and the drivers showed great skill in the performance of their duty as ferry-boats, every one being safely conveyed to the other side. The carts soon recrossed in order to fetch the remainder of our party. I took my place near the driver, in a position whence I could observe how the buffaloes and driver managed to float the carts across. Just as we were in the middle of the stream the passage became a very exciting operation. When one saw the violent current quickly rising, while the poor buffaloes were striving hard against the flood which opposed their progress, and the weight which dragged them back, the sensation experienced during those critical ten minutes was anything but pleasing. And what if by accident one of these poor animals were to lose his balance? Dragging the whole concern

with him, men and beasts would inevitably find a cool berth at the bottom of the Araxes.

All the party being now on the other side of the river, our luggage was packed on the back of the horses, while men and women took their places, we on our saddles, and our fair companions inside their maghfehs. On starting, we settled our accounts with Omer, who had chosen to accompany us, in order to see the whole party safely transferred to the opposite side. As the payment was left entirely to our discretion, and Omer deserved a recompense for all the attention he had bestowed on us, Beheram and myself agreed to give the old man a handsome *bakhshish*. Besides the payment in specie, I had prepared a little present for him and his wives, which I knew would be considered of high value by the Koord. This present consisted of two large printed handkerchiefs of mixed colours for his own use, and of four others for his harem. Having become acquainted with the fact that the Koords have a special predilection for these *yemenihs* (handkerchiefs), I had provided myself with a good stock of them on my departure from Constantinople, where that article is cheap and of good quality. The Koords value them at more than double their cost, as it is a matter of pride with the men and women to make a show of their collection of handkerchiefs of all colours, by twisting them in a pile around their

conical caps. The bigger their *kulah* (hair-dress) the greater the importance of the wearer.

This original fashion of the Koords to magnify their turbans, or hair-dress, has some resemblance to that of our ladies in the west, who are continually increasing the bulk of their chignons. The bigger the chignon, the grander the lady, and so in Koordistan—the bigger the kulah, the bigger the Koord. Omer was pleased to the utmost with the money and with the presents, things which he did not seem much accustomed to get; such, at least, was the interpretation which I gave to his many selams, and to the litany of thanks which he continued to recite while taking leave of us.

As we emerged from the steep banks of the Araxes, our caravan directed its course over an undulating ground, presenting a succession of little elevations and meadows covered with green herbs and irrigated by small rivulets. The smiling aspect of this portion of country was soon lost on reaching the higher ground, which gradually rises to the summit of the Ak-dagh. This chain divides the valley of the Araxes from the basin of the Euphrates, so that while the waters on this side (the western side) run towards the Caspian, those on the Eastern side of the mountain direct their course to the Indian Ocean.

While thus ascending to the highlands, we met on the road a caravan of oxen loaded with wheat and other pro-

visions, which were contained in large woollen bags thrown over the backs of these animals, and were bound with large ribbons round their chests. Besides this burden, some of the oxen had an extra cargo of several children, young lads and lasses belonging to the tribe. A mixed troop of Koords, women and men, followed in the rear, driving, stick in hand, the useful and peaceable quadrupeds upon whose backs they had intrusted their wealth. The Koordish oxen are, as a rule, small-sized, and walk with measured and somewhat solemn step. The *ensemble* of these caravans offers a picture interesting for its primitive simplicity, as well as for its characteristic appearance. At about seven miles distance from the river, we traversed a plateau which connected two ridges of hills, and was a point of junction between two lateral valleys. At the bottom of one of these was to be seen a Koordish village, which our drivers informed us was the residence of a certain Suleiman, the Chief of a tribe. Besides this village and some fields of wheat, no other sign was there to attest the existence of man in that deserted region.

While gazing on the dreary extent which spread in all directions as far as the eye could reach, I could not help letting my thoughts go back to those periods of historical celebrity when the Araxes had also its day of glory, being an apple of discord between contending powers, and when its waters witnessed the clash of mighty hosts and the shock of combatants.

Many a memorable event has taken place on these very banks which now in their silence and dreariness seem to be mourning the vicissitudes of past ages. Once the boundary between the Parthian and the Roman Empires, the Araxes separated the hordes of the Asiatic barbarians from the legions of civilized Rome. It was on the banks of this river, which served as a basis of operation to Mark Antony in his Parthian expedition, that his beaten soldiers took refuge from the pursuit of the Parthian archers and horsemen. Finding themselves behind this line, out of the reach of the enemy, Antony's legionaries are said to have fallen down on the ground and kissed it with tears of joy. How different must have been the feelings of the terror-struck Romans on taking shelter behind these banks from our feelings in contemplating their dreary aspect and inhospitable appearance? For them the turbid and boisterous waters of the Araxes must have possessed all the charms of life, and its banks must have appeared the loveliest of sojourns.

Under the Emperor Trajan, too, the Araxes was selected by the Romans as the basis of their operations against Cosroes the Parthian King. From here the Emperor marched to the Euphrates, which served him as a second basis, and entered Armenia, very likely by the same route which now our caravan was following. What bloody contests must the region

placed between the Araxes and the Euphrates have witnessed at that period! The mouth of the Ennis, as well as its valley, offers such great facilities for attempting the passage of the Euphrates that one is inclined to believe that no better route could have been followed by the Romans during the Parthian campaign.

CHAPTER III.

The Mountain Pass—The Valley of the Ennis—A small Caravan encamped—View of the Subhan-dagh—Squabble with Beheram Agha—His Adventures—Arrival at Koslu—There we pass the Night—Kara-kupru—The Ennis.

THE Ak-Dagh mountains, which form in this region the eastern boundary of the basin of the Araxes, offer an outlet into the valley of the Ennis through a pass known to travellers as a dangerous spot. The road, or rather track, which from the banks of the Araxes leads to this point, had been gradually rising while following the ups and downs of the hills. On approaching the pass the scenery presents a dreary aspect of desolation and gloom. From this elevated point nowhere can the eye discover a site which gives evidence of the existence of a population, unless one takes into account two small villages lost in the depths of the adjacent ravines. According to my guide's report, however, the country in the background, that is to say, the regions which lie far from sight, are not altogether solitary, as one might suppose. Koordish tribes and Koordish marauders people these solitudes, and are often to be met with;

the question of ascertaining their whereabouts is, however, a task that would defy the investigations of any curious inquirer. The only tangible proof of existence which the Koords of the neighbourhood afford to the traveller is that they sometimes lie near the pass in ambuscade, ready to strip him of all he possesses and to cut his throat by a speedy process.

It is not astonishing, therefore, if this mountain pass is notorious as a spot which is regarded with awe by travellers. The wandering Koords of the neighbourhood consider the right of holding this pass a source of emolument and permanent revenue; and frequent contests arise amongst them in order to maintain or conquer its possession. We passed safely through the defile, our caravan forming a compact and imposing little troop which was likely to offer some resistance to any party of Koords who might have attempted an attack. On a subsequent occasion, a year after, when I had to cross this pass by night, accompanied by a servant only, I ran great danger, as, twenty-four hours previous to my passage, five merchants had been cut to pieces in it by the merciless Koords.

On our emerging from the pass a new landscape opened itself before us. We beheld a long valley bordered on the south and on the north by two ranges of hills, while the river Ennis like a silver stripe was

to be seen running in the middle, following a course parallel to the surrounding heights from west to east. Though here and there the eye might discover some signs of vegetation and a few cultivated fields, on the whole the country before us was nothing but a wilderness and a solitude. The road which we were following skirts the ridge of hills bordering the northern side of the valley, till it reaches the village of Koslu. From the mountain pass to Koslu the distance is calculated to be something like three hours and a half, the pass being considered as lying half way between Kullee and Koslu. As our caravan had made only a short stay on this side of the pass, I looked out for a convenient spot where we might take our midday's rest, and partake comfortably of some refreshment. While I was intent in reconnoitring the ground to the right and left, I perceived at a short distance to the right a white tent pitched close to a ravine on the border of a field. Some few men were stretched on the ground, while their horses were peaceably grazing by their side. On my steering in that direction, I was soon perceived by the party, who all to a man arose, while two amongst them stepped forward to meet me. The usual *merhabas* and other *selams* exchanged, it was reciprocally asked whence we came, and what were our destinations. I was informed by these people that they had left the city of Van five days before in company with an officer of

the garrison quartered in that town who was on his way to Constantinople.

We had scarcely finished our questions and answers, when the officer who had been mentioned came out from his tent and approached our circle. With that pleasure and eagerness which naturally arises between comrades on meeting under such circumstances, we began to converse, leaving all the rest of the company on one side. The officer did not turn out to be one belonging to my regiment; he was from the artillery, in which he held the rank of adjutant-major. He explained to me how he had obtained a six months' leave in order to go to Constantinople, for the purpose of sacrificing his present state of single blessedness on the altar of conjugal affection. While my interlocutor was thus informing me of the object of his journey to Constantinople we directed our steps towards the tent, where on entering I stretched myself on my fellow officer's mattress and carpet and made myself at home. At the same time I despatched one of the bystanders to the people of my caravan and to Beheram Agha, in order to invite them to follow my example and alight on that spot. It was not long before my own men and luggage made their appearance; seeing the direction I had been taking, my servants had already of their own accord followed that course. As for my friend Beheram, far from joining the party, he persisted in following the highway, and disregarding my

invitation went in search of another site where his harem might comfortably rest without being exposed to importunity by our contact. The fact is, that for the last twenty-four hours the relations existing between Beheram and myself had assumed a tone of coolness, that is to say, we were reciprocating on rather stiff terms.

As there were no peculiar interests at stake, nor any inducement whatsoever which could possibly be a cause of discordance between Beheram and myself, it might be wondered how we ever succeeded in raising a squabble for no earthly purpose. However odd it may seem that we could not manage to get on nicely together during the journey, the source of discord was not the less of a serious character. It was nothing else but jealousy, that stumbling-block over which no Turk has ever been known to get safe and clear. My friend Beheram had conceived the foolish idea of becoming jealous with regard to his pretty daughter, and very likely for the whole lot of women he had with him. Some incautious looks and furtive glances had involuntarily been exchanged from both sides, while the attentions and *petits soins* which I did not fail to bestow on my pretty fellow-travellers could not but awaken the jealous disposition of a true believer, as Beheram to all intents and purposes really was. He evidently could not get over the luncheon party which I had contrived to arrange the

day before, on the top of the mountains overlooking the Araxes. To him that incident had unquestionably been a cause of annoyance, so that he could not easily make up his mind to forget it. Gallantry and European refinement were looked upon by him as stuff and nonsense—more, as a dangerous game. Beheram did not seem to like such things. That and no other reason could there be why during the last twenty-four hours his temper had been sulky, and that only a few words had been exchanged between us. Following, therefore, the dictation of his own spleen, Beheram paid no attention to my message, and decided on taking his family and people to another place further on, where he selected a bivouac suitable to his own convenience.

It being of no use to trouble myself any more about Beheram and his caprices, I set to work to provide for our luncheon, which was not long in being prepared. In a few minutes an omelet made with onions and preserved meat was served, while sausages, cheese, and some Turkish sweetmeats took the place of entremets. Abdullah Effendi, such was the name of the adjutant, joined the party, bringing his own stock of provisions. During our meal, as well as afterwards while taking our coffee and smoking the tchibook, the adjutant did not fail to give all sorts of information about Van and the state of affairs there. He gave me abundant details, and even bio-

graphical sketches of the principal officers and folks of the country, so as to acquaint me beforehand with everything and everybody it was important for me to know. Time flew more quickly than one could think while engaged in our conversation and repast. Two hours having thus elapsed, my horses were then made ready and I took leave of Abdullah Effendi, to whom I expressed my best wishes for his projected marriage, as well as for his speedy return to Van, where I hoped to see him shortly. With a quick step we hurried on, with the view of overtaking Beheram and his party, who by this time were some distance ahead of us.

While thus hastening to regain the lost time, my party came to a point where the spurs of the hills, projecting towards the middle of the valley, offer to the traveller an extensive view of the eastern portion of the basin of the Ennis and of the lofty chain which, rising from the plains of the Euphrates, divides these from the country surrounding the Lake of Van. The huge summits which the eye began to discover, appeared under an aspect resembling that of the noblest trees in large forests when they elevate their lofty heads above the inferior masses. Amongst those high summits the Subhan-dagh could be perceived raising its imposing white head above all other competitors. My guides hastened to bring me the news that we were within sight of the Subhan, and it was through the help of their indications and directions

that I succeeded in getting at last a distinct sight of the mountain. After Ararat, the Subhan is the highest mountain of this part of Asia, and at this season it was yet covered with snow. Its height is supposed to be eleven thousand feet above the level of the sea. Mount Ararat cannot of course be seen either from here or from any other place around Lake Van, as the distance is too great. However, even when within the range of sight Ararat remains often invisible, as its head is generally enveloped in the midst of thick clouds. The distant view of Subhan-dagh was to our caravan a gratifying sight, because, though we had not yet got over half our journey, the summit of that mountain was a point which already established a certain link between ourselves and Van, our place of destination and the end of our journey. While supporting the fatigues and tediousness of a slow overland route, a traveller eagerly grasps at any shadow which can inspire him with the hope of a speedy deliverance from his troubles and toils. Whether travelling by land or by sea the same feelings, under a different form, are constantly experienced. As a pilot may often have rejoiced while mistaking the glare of a fire for a lighthouse, so did we all enjoy for a while the illusion that our journey's end was close at hand. Unfortunately the Subhan-dagh was yet far off; twenty leagues of plain and hilly country were to be crossed before reaching its proximity.

We were not long before overtaking Beheram Agha, whose caravan could be perceived in the plain. A few minutes' good trotting was sufficient, and the whole of the party found itself once more united in one body. Beheram, as was to be expected, greeted my junction with the same cool demeanour which he had considered proper to assume. He was mistaken, however, if he thought that I would put up with it any longer. Nothing really is so unbearable as that sort of silent grudge within which some persons choose to intrench themselves, in order to show their resentment and displeasure. I would not, however, put up with it this time, my deliberate purpose being either to break through it or separate myself from Beheram, letting him go his own way.

On approaching him, therefore, without any other preliminary, I put the question straightforwardly before him, asking what he meant by this strange behaviour of his. I gave him to understand, at the same time, that I did not feel the least hesitation in wishing him farewell and in continuing the journey by myself, if such was to be his choice. This sudden and resolute step did not fail to bring about the result that I expected. With Turks and Orientals in general the best way to settle matters is that of putting boldly before them an ultimatum, which by its unflinching terms leaves no room for misunderstandings. This I have always found to be the best

weapon; the Oriental seldom withstands the shock. His concealed thoughts and ambiguous dealings once faced, the Turk yields to his antagonist and easily comes to terms.

Beheram gave way accordingly to my attack, and lowering his former tone, began to tell me that his own preoccupations were the real cause of the depressed state of his mind, and that, thinking of his past and present vicissitudes, he could not help feeling low-spirited and sulky. As for what concerned our mutual relations, he assured me that he considered it a great boon to have had the chance of meeting a fellow-traveller of my weight and standing. Scarcely had the last words of this complimentary prologue been uttered, when Beheram, turning his eyes pathetically towards me, gave a deep sigh and said, "My Beg, believe me I was not born to lead such a life; misfortunes and want have reduced me to this state; by birth I was a prince, and now I am compelled to tear about the world in search of a scanty existence. My lot now is to visit the four corners of the globe, measuring all the plains and hills that it ever pleased Allah to create. I deplore my misfortune, as well as that of my children." These words, and the state of emotion in which the poor man evidently was, deeply affected me, and awoke in me a sentiment of sympathy towards him and his family which I had not felt before. I therefore requested him to relate

to me his misfortunes, as the interest that I felt on his behalf would make me sympathize with his sorrow.

Beheram Agha began then to relate what had befallen him since his younger days.

Touzdji-zadeh is the name of the once renowned family of which Beheram was an offspring. According to his account, his father was a native prince of Lazistan, whose feudal seat was at Rizeh, on the Black Sea. Under the rule of his ancestors the whole of Lazistan and the city of Rizeh, its capital, had enjoyed a period of wealth and prosperity. The imposing ruins which I saw on a subsequent visit of mine to Rizeh fully confirmed Beheram Agha's narrative. The remains of the fortress and feudal castle, the structure of some bridges and fountains dating from that period, are a standing proof of the relatively prosperous state of that country during the reign of the Touzdji-zadehs. The power of this family had spread wide along the shores of the Black Sea, its aid and alliance being sought for by the princes of Circassia, Abbasia, and Georgia. The mother of the late prince of Abbasia, Prince Michael, was Beheram's aunt. His father, as a vassal of the Porte, had always supplied a contingent to the Imperial armies, and had opposed the invasion of Paskiewitch with a body of fourteen thousand men, who joined the Seraskier Esad Pasha at Erzerum.

When, however, the government of the Sultan adopted the policy of centralization, the Touzdji-zadehs, as well as all the other semi-independent princes established under the suzerainty of the Porte, were doomed to destruction. The plan which the Ottoman government adopted for the execution of its projects had all the merits of elaborate craft and of deep calculation. Instead of becoming themselves the executors of their own policy, the Turks thought it more advisable to associate one of the victims to their cause by giving him the temporary commission of hangman of all the others. That nefarious task once achieved, the Turks reserved to themselves the performance of the final act, which was the extermination of the very man whom they had employed as the instrument of their policy. While the jay eats the grasshopper, the hawk waits for the jay. Everywhere the same principles seem to guide the animal kingdom. On this occasion poor Beheram's family was doomed to undergo the fate of the jay. Haznehdar-zadeh Osman is named by the Porte Pasha of Trebizond, and receives orders to exterminate one by one all the chieftains within his reach. Beheram's father, being the first, is summoned to appear before the Pasha of Trebizond, while troops are sent in order to seize his territory. The prince, seeing the approaching storm, gathers his forces and marches against the invaders. Several actions take place, in one of

which Beheram's father is wounded and made prisoner. His brother sustained a long siege within the fortress of Rizeh, where he was besieged by land and by sea. A capitulation put an end to the war, after Beheram's uncle had blown himself up together with some of his more devoted followers. The power of the Touzdji-zadehs once crushed, all the members of that family were exiled to some remote corner of Asiatic Turkey. Beheram, with his father and brothers, was sent to Diarbekir, where the father shortly after died in poverty and sorrow, having been deprived of all that he possessed. Left an orphan at the age of ten or twelve, Beheram was allowed to seek the means of existence the best way he could. Since that time, he said, he had been compelled to lead a wandering life in order to find any small emolument which would enable him to sustain his family. In telling me all he had had to undergo during his lifetime, Beheram asserted that what, more than anything else, was to him a source of grief and affliction, was the degrading treatment to which he was subjected at Constantinople by those grandees to whom he applied for protection and employment. "My kismet," he added, "is such; it cannot be helped, but I was not born to lead such a life."

The narrative of these vicissitudes, and the sad condition to which Beheram had been reduced, affected me deeply, it being difficult not to feel sympathy

for a man who by right of birth and lineage deserved a better lot. I endeavoured by reasoning and persuasive arguments to soothe his grief and to raise his sentiments, telling him that every mortal has more or less his own share of misfortune, and that it is only through fortitude and perseverance that one can succeed in baffling adversity. I expressed to him, likewise, my hope that through the new appointment which he had obtained he would be in a position to insure the future welfare of his family. Beheram, however, knew that my words were empty phrases; he was so unlucky as to be an honest man amongst the Turks, and as such he had no chance ever to attain an easy independence.

While narratives, arguments, and reflections were rapidly succeeding one another, time and distance passed almost unperceived. Our horses had been getting us within sight of Koslu, the village where we were to spend the night. On the opposite side of the valley a building could be seen, situated on the skirt of a hill. Our guides pointed it out as being the residence of Khurshid Bey, chief of the Koordish tribes settled on the banks of the Ennis. Curious as I naturally was to see for the first time the famous black tents of the Koords, I tried if I could descry any of them at a distance. Unfortunately, there were none to be seen. From Erzerum up to here the country seemed so deserted,

that one might have supposed that the whole population had expressly been driven away.

Koslu is a small village in the Koordish style, like all those we had met with throughout the country. The number of houses which give to it the right of being called a village does not exceed twenty. Three of these houses, situated in the middle of the village, might be considered in such a country as remarkable structures. Unlike the more plebeian dwellings, these three mansions were built above ground; one of them had even a kind of balcony erected above the entrance. As might be supposed, they belonged to the principal personages of the community, whom we found waiting at the door of the conspicuous building, ready to welcome our arrival. On alighting from horseback, the kiaja of the village, a kind of burgomaster, approached in order to help me down, by supporting my elbows while descending from the saddle. Declining such an honour, I asked him whether his village could afford good accommodation for Beheram's family as well as for ourselves and followers. The kiaja opened the three mansions, telling us to make our choice. Taking it for granted that Turkish women would not make any use of the balcony, I selected that house for myself. Beheram's family occupied the other, and the people of our caravan established themselves in the third. After every one had been quartered, the

next and not less important business was to inquire whether we could find anything to eat. Preserved provisions are very useful and good things, but if one has a chance of procuring fresh meat and a warm meal, so much the better. My carnivorous propensities suggested to me the desirability of having a lamb killed, stuffed, and roasted, in the fashion of the country, which offers by no means a bad repast.

While our dinner was being prepared, I strolled round about the village, accompanied by the kiaja and another fellow, who, having been several times to Constantinople and back, was looked upon by the people of the country as a knowing and clear-sighted individual. He possessed, undoubtedly, some advanced ideas with regard to the doctrine of nationalities, and it was evident, from his silent and downcast demeanour, that he was one of the disaffected party. I guessed that this was the kind of person who would be likely to afford some information about the state of the country. Taking, therefore, the bare appearance of the land as a pretext, I asked the kiaja and his companion how they accounted for there not being a single tree or bush visible in their fields and properties, and why the people did not improve their grounds by growing fruits, vegetables, and all such productions, which would contribute to their comfort and ease. "We know very well," they replied, "what is good and what is bad in this world,

but this country is Koordistan, and you must not compare it with Constantinople or Frenkistan. Here the people are poor and oppressed—God only knows how we live. If we were to cultivate orchards and to plant trees, do you think that we should ever eat their fruits or enjoy their shade? No sooner do you plant a tree here than some Koord or other comes and cuts it down. It is already a hard task for our people to preserve their crops and to gather them in. The Koords are the curse of the country." As it was the first time that I heard these complaints of the Armenians against the Koords, I felt for the poor people; but afterwards, hearing the same story over and over again, I got used to it at last, and looked upon it as one of those evils which must be endured, for the simple reason that they cannot be cured.

On returning back to my lodgings, I had to wait some time before the dinner was served. I went, therefore, to join Beheram, who had put himself at the head of the roasting party, and had undertaken to provide for our repast. As a proof of the good understanding and cordial feelings which had been cemented between us, it was agreed that Beheram should relinquish for that evening his harem, and dine with me on the balcony. We arranged that the dinner should be served there, that we might enjoy the freshness of the evening and the brightness of a clear night. During dinner-time and till

late at night a few words on the state of the land, some jokes concerning the Koords and their customs, one or two narratives of the different countries and people we had happened to visit,—such were the subjects of general gossip. At last every one retired to his place of rest; as for myself I had my couch stretched on the balcony, due precautions having been taken that the place should be thoroughly washed and swept.

On the morning of the fourth day of our journey we rose as usual a little after daybreak. The drivers took at once to their early duty and began to groom those deserving members of the caravan upon whom devolved the task of conveying us and our luggage. While the drivers were thus making themselves useful, we were making ourselves more useful still by taking our breakfast. The luggage once fixed on the pack-saddles and the caravan being ready to start, we rode away from Koslu, saluting each other with the usual greeting "Urler-olah"—"Let all be prosperous"—which it is customary in the East for travellers to address to each other on the point of starting. The direction which we began to follow was south-east; deviating from that which had brought us from the mountain pass to Koslu. We were thus leaning to the right while cutting diagonally across the valley of the Ennis. On the right of our road there was no village nor any object worth remarking, while on the

left three villages were to be seen in the plain. The first one was situated in the middle of the plain at a distance of two miles from the road; the second was on an elevation which sloped down towards the river. I could not ascertain the names of these two villages, though on passing subsequently through this country I happened to stop at the former. On that occasion I reached the village about evening, accompanied by a servant, and having no escort of any kind to protect me. The inhabitants looked very suspicious, and their countenances were anything but reassuring. Fearing to stop there during the night, I abruptly left in the midst of the darkness, so that evidently the opportunity was not favourable for collecting statistical information. I was particularly alarmed by the sinister looks and the more than ominous questions which the fellows who approached me here addressed to me. On seeing, however, my determination to leave the village at all risks, the villagers proposed to give me as guide a Koord who was the very model of a cut-throat. This man was to show me my way! The fact is that these Armenian villagers in the plain are in connivance and partnership with the Koordish tribes, corresponding with them, and taking care to let them know what is passing on the highways. I do not entertain the least doubt that this guide was a spy who had come in order to look after some business relating to myself; not a very honourable one, I fear.

Whatever might have been my objection to set out at night under the guidance of such an equivocal character, I thought it would be safer to have him in my grasp than to leave him behind. Being near me he would have been pretty sure of his fate if anything wrong was to occur. I was lucky enough, however, to get rid of this fellow by sheltering myself at Koslu. From there I got a trusty guide and an escort, with which I then crossed the mountain pass.

The third village, which could be seen at a distance on the left, was called Kara-tchoban, which place is close to the junction of the Ennis and the Euphrates. The mouth of the Ennis is three leagues below Kara-kupru, which we were on the point of approaching. This small town is situated on the banks of the river Ennis, and derives its name from the remains of an old bridge which is called by the Turks Kara-kupru, or the Black Bridge. The ruins consist of two pillars of brickwork standing in the middle of the river. From their appearance one would consider them as belonging to a period earlier than the Roman epoch. Eighty feet is about the width which I reckoned the river to be in this part of its course; its depth varies considerably, several fords allowing an easy passage. The borough, or village, is a little below the bridge. As a panorama Kara-kupru appears to the eye of the traveller like an area of an ashy tint, on the surface of which a lot of little and big holes are to be seen,

which might be taken either for chimney holes, windows, or doors. The burnt up and dusty appearance of the landscape had a contrast, however, in the gay groups of women, lasses, and children who were swarming on the tops of the houses and along the banks of the river. Some of them were washing and beating their linen as hard as they could. I discovered amongst them several good specimens of female physical development and of correct forms. This village is likewise inhabited by an Armenian population, from which the male element seemed to have entirely disappeared. I do not recollect having seen more than three or four men altogether. It fell naturally then to the lot of the women to give us a welcome, and to fulfil the duties of hospitality. Their shyness was unfortunately an obstacle, so that two of them only could summon courage enough to approach us. These two damsels — by-the-by I must correct the statement, one of them was an old woman, a kind of guardian angel to the younger—these two women then brought some jugs full of *ayran*, an Oriental beverage, which is as much in vogue in this part of the world as beer is in England or Germany. Ayran is a kind of sour milk in a state of decomposition, which is kept and prepared in a peculiar manner. By adding a little seasoning of garlic this beverage obtains a piquant and agreeable flavour. This is at least my opinion, and I do not hesitate to say that many of our gentlefolks who affect

horror at the very name of that objectionable ingredient, would have drunk of the seasoned ayran with as much thirst, if not avidity, as I myself did. The ayran is considered a national beverage amongst the Turks, Koords, and Arabs; its principal merits being its very cooling and nutritive properties. In many cases it is employed as a medicine. The Turkish soldiers consider it a first-rate specific against colics and sun-strokes. In those cases a little gunpowder is mixed up with the ayran.

Our stay at Kara-kupru did not last longer than half an hour. We then followed the road which leads to the ford, and under our guides' direction got over to the other side of the Ennis. The water being rather deep, some uneasiness was naturally felt with regard to the ladies and the luggage. Fortunately the horses showed themselves as cautious and clever as any guide could possibly be, so that the only damage we sustained was the wetting of the cargo which could not be kept above water. On the other side of the Ennis we had only a small tract of flat country to cross. Further on, the road lay through a series of hills which run like a promontory between the Euphrates and the Ennis. The country here had a more smiling and greener look, though no trees were to be met with. Two villages were seen at a short distance from the highway. One of these, known under the name of Nureddin, was said to be the residence

of a feudal Shekh to whom a great part of the territory that we were crossing belongs. A salt-pit exists in the neighbourhood of Nureddin. This establishment belongs to the government, and is called by the natives Tuzla. I visited the spot in my subsequent tour. The only buildings found near the mine are a coffee-house and a small depôt. Towards sunset we reached Karaghil, which was to be for this night our resting place.

CHAPTER IV.

Karaghil—The Euphrates—Arrival on the Banks of the River—The Ferry-boat—The Proprietor—The Soldiers—Crossing the River—Tegut—Pirun.

THOUGH the journey from Koslu had occupied only eight hours, a distance which was not much above our daily itinerary, we did not reach Karaghil before dark. All along the road we had been indulging in a moderate pace. On descending from the hills we had an extensive view of the valley of the Euphrates, which was then embellished by the fiery rays of the setting sun. The same group of mountains we had first perceived when emerging from the pass was now before us. Their huge masses were now severed into numerous summits and ranges, some of which appeared still far distant, while others stretched their ravines and valleys down to the adjacent plains. The Subhan-dagh was not visible; but that was not surprising, as we had reached almost to the foot of a chain which stood like a screen before that giant of the range. Towards the north-east the panorama offered a vast extent of plains and table-

lands, extending in the direction of the high regions of Ararat and of the sources of the Euphrates. This historic river could be seen up to a certain distance winding the course of its waters through barren and desolate countries, as if striving to impart to them life and motion. To the south the sight is limited by high grounds, amongst which the Euphrates disappears. The village of Karaghil, where we spent the night, like almost all the villages to be met with on the high road, has an Armenian population mixed to some extent with Koords.

One of the peculiarities about the inhabitants of this place is that Armenians and Koords seem to be on the whole a very boisterous lot. They might have been taken for a colony of boatmen and porters imported from Malta. Their shouting was almost intolerable; but, judging from the earnestness of their gesticulations and expressions, there could be no doubt that something very important must have been at the bottom of all the din.

Unfortunately for us the agitation of the community was the cause of our dining on rather short allowance. At night, too, our accommodation was anything but commodious. In the midst of the torments which it is in the power of swarms of insects to inflict on a helpless victim, it was useless to attempt to shut one's eyes. If in the daytime the inhabitants of the place had been guilty of shouting and squabbling, at

night these little wretches were guilty of too much noiseless activity, a kind of diabolic activity, indeed, that was enough to put any one into a state of fever. At last, finding neither rest nor peace, I jumped up in despair, not knowing what to do, or where to run for shelter. Fortunately an idea came all on a sudden to my mind, which if it had come before would have spared me a great deal of suffering. I thought of constructing a hammock on the principle of those used by our boys at sea. By that contrivance I hoped I should succeed in lifting myself far above the level of any bloodthirsty reptile. My plan succeeded to admiration, as by attaching four ropes to the pillars sustaining the roof in the middle of the hall, and by arranging my carpet and mattress between the ropes, I managed to make myself a snuggish berth. Thanks to this ingenious contrivance I was enabled to enjoy some tranquillity till the morning. During the subsequent nights we had to spend on the road, I continued to sleep in my berth, perched on the pillars like an owl on a branch, to the great astonishment of the Armenians and Koords, who thought it transcended human ingenuity to invent such an expedient. To them it must have seemed something like a conjurer's feat, as many came in expressly in order to study attentively the mechanism of the contrivance.

Leaving Karaghil and its noisy inhabitants, we were in the early freshness of the morning on the

banks of the Euphrates. On the opposite shore was to be seen the village of Tegut in front of us. To the left, in the plain, one could perceive the large borough of Kopp, peopled entirely by an Armenian population. Beyond Kopp a church with a small convent joined to it could distinctly be seen. Further up, close to the river, were situated Sultanieh on the left, and Kara-tchoban on the right bank, not far from the mouth of the Ennis. From Karaghil to the river, the ladies excepted, every one of us went on foot, as the distance is not more than a thousand yards. The intervening ground which we had to cross is low, and marshy in some places. The right bank of the Euphrates, on this portion of its basin, is lower than the left bank, which, elevated and abrupt, domineers for the most part over the other. In many places a muddy bottom is to be found along the right shore, which circumstance renders the approach rather dangerous. The width of the Euphrates is here about 160 yards. The volume of its waters offers an imposing aspect while flowing majestically before the eyes of the spectator.

On arriving at the sandy beach which serves as a pier to the caravans and travellers who have to effect the crossing of the river, we found a quantity of bales and packages thrown indiscriminately on the shore, while a lot of Persian drivers were shouting and throwing stones at a troop of horses which, blowing and puffing,

were swimming towards our shore. On the opposite side many more of these merchants were conspicuous, thanks to the pointed black extinguishers on their heads, which distinguish the Persians from the rest of mortals. All this crowd was nothing else but a caravan going from the frontier town of Khoi to Erzerum and Trebizond. This was but a small caravan, mustering not more than two or three hundred horses and mules. The formidable ones go regularly by the way of Bayazid and Toprac-kaleh, which is the high road to Tebriz and northern Persia. These caravans have sometimes more than a thousand beasts of burden; they are the goods-trains of the East.

Being brought to a stand-still by the crossing of this caravan, an operation which was likely to go on for some hours longer, I saw the necessity of having recourse to martial law to compel the ferry-boat administration to interrupt their business with the Persians, and take our small caravan over without delay. While the ferry-boats were still on the other side busy at work, I made inquiries in order to know whether there was any kind of manager to be found on this side with whom I might open negotiations. Few minutes passed, when my people brought before me a dark and fierce-looking individual who, judging from his exterior, seemed to be from top to bottom a sample of a Koordish knight. His stock of war-

like implements was complete. With shield, spear, sword, dagger, and a carbine hanging from behind his shoulder, literally nothing was wanting to make the human figure standing before me a walking arsenal of arms and a breathing engine of war. This gentleman was the proprietor of the ferry-boat, or, to be more exact, the person who had taken from the Government a year's lease for the right of conveying people across the Euphrates. The *Caron dimonio* who was employed in Dante's *Inferno* to take the souls to the other side of the *Palude* came to my mind, as a parallel could evidently be traced between the infernal pilot and our ferry-boat proprietor.

Before such a fellow I assumed a high tone, saying that I required him to put a stop to the passage of the caravan, as I had no intention of waiting till that work was over. "Well," said he, "let it be so." This first matter once settled, I entered into the subject of payment. This point is always a difficult one to settle, even if you have to deal with people whose only weapon is the arm of the law, but if they are armed to the teeth what is to be done? I asked the Koord what we were to give for the conveyance of ourselves and luggage to the other shore. After a moment's consideration, during which the Koord appeared to be concocting some arithmetical problem, he coolly brought forward his pretensions to a payment of 200 piastres, something like two pounds. Instead of

showing any sign of irritation, as a reply to this exorbitant demand, I simply asked him whether, being a Government tenant of the ferry-boat, he would show me a legal tariff according to which he could justify his computation. Such a question was enough to put our warrior in a perfect rage. His fierce black eyes, *occhi di bragia,* were keenly cast upon me for an instant or two, then scornfully turning his back he walked off, muttering with an air of bravado these words, "I know what I have paid for tenancy—I have paid eighty pounds—that I know, I don't know of any tariff."

This summary mode of answering adopted by the Koordish tenant required a more summary procedure on my part. I therefore decided on fighting it out in such a way as to show the Koord that his being armed up to the teeth was not of much avail with me. A circumstance which in the present state of things encouraged my aggressive plans against the proprietor of the ferry-boat, as well as the Persian caravan, was the presence on the shore of eight or ten soldiers who were waiting in order to get across. These fellows were returning to their homes in the neighbourhood of Bitlis. The price asked, however, by the Koord proprietor being too high, they had been compelled to postpone their passage till the evening. I seized therefore this opportunity, and immediately calling the soldiers to me I

told them to get hold of the ferry-boat as soon as she should approach; adding that if the Koord and his people, or any of the Persians belonging to the caravan, were to offer any resistance, I gave them my authority to use force. Soldiers, drivers, and everyone included, our troop formed a respectable body of about thirty fighting men, united to force the passage of the Euphrates.

It was not long before the ferry-boat made its tardy appearance in the middle of the stream, following the current and steering its course towards the landing spot. As it approached the beach, a rush was made in order to seize it. Such was the impetus of the onset that several of the Persians fell into the shallows of the river while attempting to land. A hand to hand fight ensued, in which many got a ducking, and some received bruises, but none were killed. Our determination having inspired all with a salutary fear, we became the lawful possessors of the boat, which remained the prize of our victory.

Before, however, going on with the narrative of our passage of the Euphrates, a description must be given of this ferry-boat, lest the reader should be led to believe that the ferry-boats of the Euphrates are something after the style of those he may have seen on the Mersey or the Hudson.

The name given by the natives to the ferry-boats

of the Euphrates is kelek. An exact description of these boats is inserted in Xenophon's Anabasis; Expedition of Cyrus, Book III., where the historian speaks of an attempt made by the army to cross the Tigris. Instead, therefore, of attempting to give my own account of the structure of the kelek, I will quote here in preference the Greek writer's description, which faithfully portrays that peculiar vessel as it existed twenty-four centuries before, and as it still exists in our days :—

"They, the generals and captains, were in that perplexed state, when a man from Rhodes came to announce to them that if they were to give him all that was required in order to effectuate the passage, and if they would grant him a talent as reward for his services, he would take upon himself to get across the river four thousand *hoplites*. On their questioning him what did he require for such a purpose, he answered thus : 'I require two thousand inflated skins, and I see that you have a good number of sheep, goats, oxen, and asses, whose skins once taken off and inflated your passage across the river would become an easy matter. But besides that, I must have the ropes which you employ for the beasts of burden in your train; because it is with those ropes that I will tie the skins together, and attach a number of stones to each skin to serve the purpose of anchor. Then by putting all

those skins together and binding them to each other, I shall be able to throw over the whole trees and earth. You will then be convinced that the skins do not sink, as each skin can bear the weight of two men without sinking.'" The historian adds, that the generals did not consider the plan practicable, on account of the enemy's cavalry occupying the opposite bank.

The invention of the man of Rhodes was then thrown on one side, though it did not prevent our finding the same invention in full practice now, about twenty-four centuries after. A question which one is naturally led to ask is whether the man of Rhodes was really the one who conceived the idea of constructing the kelek, or whether it was not already known along the Tigris and the Euphrates before the epoch of Xenophon, as it has been ever since? As scarcely any change has taken place throughout that country since the day of the Greek hero's exploits, and every habit and custom has remained unaltered, it may be assumed that a long time before Xenophon the state of that region had been very much the same. The only difference existing between the kelek which we had mounted and the one described by Xenophon is that ours was a small one, having only about fifty skins. Instead, too, of having trees and earth arranged on the top, the deck of our kelek consisted of a platform—a sort of basket-work which answered the pur-

pose. Keleks on a large scale are used in the lower basins of both the Tigris and the Euphrates. They are formed of one or two hundred skins, and their decks consist of a rough kind of frame-work, over which goods and luggage are stowed in heaps. In the midst of these the merchant and the traveller stretch their limbs on their prayer-carpets, or cross their legs while calmly enjoying the smoke of their narghilehs or pipes. A small kiosk, roughly made of branches and covered with some stuff or other, serves to protect the passenger from the burning sun and from the dews of the early morning.

On taking possession of the kelek our people began to load it with the luggage and the pack-saddles. The operation once over, a number of them took their seats on the top of the cargo. The kelek then left the shore, being driven to the middle of the stream by the steermanship of two half-naked fellows, who, placed at two opposite points of the raft, pushed it on with two long perches, thus directing its course. Two consecutive voyages carried the whole of our caravan and the soldiers to the opposite bank. I took my passage together with Beheram and his harem; as our relations had been growing warmer, and we were getting quite on an intimate footing. On the one hand, my presence may have reassured those ladies; and on the other, it

was a cause of satisfaction and pleasure to me to think that my assistance and services might be of use to them.

Travellers in general, Orientals as well as Westerns, are of opinion that to have a lady companion *en route* is almost a calamity. Though my wanderings entitle me to be ranked among travellers, I must on this score disclaim any participation in such an opinion. On the contrary, I think that it is a proof of selfishness, and betrays a want of chivalrous notions to sustain such a theory. Indeed, what greater satisfaction, what sweeter feeling, can a man ever experience than the consciousness that his assistance may be bestowed in a moment of danger on the weak and helpless? Ladies' society is ardently sought by our sex, and we are chivalrous enough to protect the fair if a danger threatens her while by chance she is under our guardianship. To take any such duty upon oneself is a responsibility which some, however, like to evade if possible. It is not unusual, therefore, to hear men say that to be in the company of ladies while travelling is a hard trial. But those who thus choose to evade a burden, do they ignore that they lose the very charm of life? Yes, egotism finds in itself its punishment; and he who wishes to spare himself a little *ennui* and trouble is condemned to the loss of those charms which render the society of the fair so attractive.

While on board the kelek I did not spare any means of rendering myself agreeable and useful to Beheram's family, by laughing and joking about the Koords, their keleks, and other absurdities of theirs. Our warrior, the proprietor of the boat, who had come on board with us, was turned likewise into a laughing-stock, because of his exasperated looks and extravagant appearance. But in the midst of this merry entertainment one of Beheram's slaves gave a violent shriek, which put the whole of the party into a state of alarm. For a moment we thought that something had happened. It was soon ascertained, however, that the cause of the fright was nothing more than some splashes of water which had risen up to the place where the women were seated. Confidence was easily restored by means of some reassuring words, and soon afterwards the kelek achieved her voyage by landing our party on the opposite bank. We climbed up the steep bank, and on the level ground above it we found our property, our beasts of burden or saddle, which had swum across, our drivers and fellow-travellers all mustered on one spot.

The Persian merchants were at a little distance from them. Some of them had crossed their legs on the top of a lot of bales, while others, stretched on the ground, were smoking their wooden *narghilehs*. These fellows did not seem much vexed at the fact of my having stopped for a short time their pas-

sage to the other side of the river; but after all, forbearance was the best expedient for them to adopt in such a case, and to that they had made up their minds. The merchants and drivers of this caravan looked a hardy kind of men, patient and simple, as the common sort of Orientals generally are. These people belonged to the northern part of Persia, Azerbaïdjan, where the population is composed of a fine race inured to fatigue. Unlike their countrymen of the south, the northern Persians are industrious and enterprising. The hardships they undergo whilst crossing the whole of Asia Minor in the midst of storms and hurricanes, or exposed to the scorching heat, are really astonishing. Many a caravan has been buried under the snow while creeping on its laborious journey.

An hour was spent on the banks of the Euphrates, while the horses were being made ready to continue the journey. Everything being prepared for our departure, and the women having perched themselves on their maghfehs, I left them to take the lead, remaining a little behind, as the accounts with the kelek proprietor had not been settled yet. That business had been kept expressly to the last. Beheram was advising me to be careful not to provoke the Koord, as he considered him rather a dangerous customer to deal with. I was determined, however, to give the fellow a lesson, and to show him that his shield and

weapons are not always available implements. Turning myself, therefore, towards the warrior, who had been silently waiting all that time, I handed him over something like sixty piastres, about ten shillings, and told him that that was what I considered to be due to him for our fare, as well as for the fare of the soldiers who had crossed with us. The Koord turned his back with indignation at such a proceeding, uttering, in the meantime, an incomprehensible protest, by which, I suppose, he meant to say that he would not accept such a trifling sum. Without entering into any further argument with this stubborn individual, I cut asunder the difficulty by placing on a stone the money which he had refused to take. Getting then on my horse, I shouted to the Koord that the money was there, and that it was for him to judge if he would leave it for others to take.

We then all rode away, to the great amusement of Beheram, who was heartily laughing at the silly look of the Koord during this transaction. Several times we turned back in order to see if the fellow would condescend to pick up the money from the spot where it had been deposited, but the proud Koord seemed to be keeping aloof from his prey, though doubtless in the end he did not leave it for anyone else to appropriate.

The path which we began to follow across meadow grounds had a due easterly direction, and gradually

rose till it attained a small elevation, on which is to be seen the village of Tegut. This place is at a distance of three miles from the Euphrates, and is composed of eight or ten houses, considered miserable even in Koordistan. The principal monument which embellished this spot consisted of a well in the Oriental style, having its lofty perch and long chain attached to it, with the bucket as an appendix. Here we halted for a few minutes while my men went in search of some *ayran*, the beverage with which our readers are already familiar. From this point, the road which leads to Bitlis takes a southern direction, and separates itself from the route we were to follow. The soldiers who had been crossing the river with us came here to take leave, and expressed their thanks for my having got them safely and cheaply over to this side of the water. Upon this they marched off, but such seemed to be their delight at having been treated with a free passage, that as a sign of gratitude the poor fellows began to fire away their muskets in the midst of merry shouts, hurrahs, and selams.

Before going on with the narrative, I must here observe that the route which our caravan had selected was the one which leads to the southern coast of the lake of Van. This route, being hilly and difficult, is not the one which is generally followed by the caravans and travellers going from Van to Erzerum. The main road goes along the northern shore, passing

through a level and easy country. The parting point of the two routes is at the landing place on the Euphrates. Those who choose to go by the northern shore take to the left, and direct their course towards the town of Kop, while those who, like ourselves, prefer to follow the southern coast, go straight on to Tegut. The reason why we selected the latter road was that in this direction the country along the lake is more thickly peopled, and that the numerous villages to be found here offer better accommodation and greater comforts to the traveller.

The time which had been spent on the borders of the Euphrates, and in packing and unpacking, would scarcely allow us to achieve a journey of six or seven hours. It was consequently decided to choose the village of Pirun for our halting place. Pirun is at three hours distance from Tegut, and therefore four from the Euphrates. The drivers were of opinion that we should alight that night in a small village situated an hour on this side of Pirun, where they said an opulent Shekh, the lord of the land, would be happy to supply our caravan with a grand dinner, and with all kinds of luxuries. Though the advice may have been given from very good motives, I thought better to push on, taking our chances for a good or bad reception at Pirun. Between four and five in the afternoon we came in sight of the village, which is situated in the midst of broken scenery, formed by

rocky hills and narrow valleys. A change was here visible in the aspect of the country, the landscape being more interesting and lively than it had been all along our road from Erzerum to this place. This transformation gradually began near the point where we had been told that we were in the proximity of the Shekh's residence.

The position of Pirun is very picturesque. The little hovels forming the village are built all around the skirts of an elevation which is situated between two fertile miniature valleys. From the summit of this elevation a feudal castle dominates the surrounding country. This castle is an imposing building of large and finely cut stones, having a grand entrance with a balcony on the top. The style is Arabic, though now in a condition wanting repair. In front of this mansion its feudal lords had arranged a large oblong-square, which harmonized very well with the whole aspect of the place.

On reaching the village we found that our drivers, together with Beheram's harem, had gone straight to the castle; the custom in the East being to go at once to the residence of the grandee of the land. We climbed, therefore, to the top of the hill and rode up to the entrance of the mansion, where three or four Koords were standing by the wall. On alighting from my horse I inquired how we were to obtain admittance into the residence, as the state gate was shut,

and, judging from appearances, seemed not to have been opened for a long period. The by-standing Koords then showed us a small entrance at the other end of the building, and said that we might get in through it. While on the point of entering by the little door, a young and manly-looking fellow stepped forward and, addressing himself to me, endeavoured to make me understand in broken Turkish that we were his welcome guests, but that, as his father Ahmed Bey was absent, he requested us to make allowances for any inconvenience we might meet with under his roof. After this preamble the young Bey led us through a series of dark narrow corridors formed by lofty walls constructed of huge stones. A massive staircase of the same structure gave admission into a hall dimly lighted by two windows very much resembling loop-holes. The interior of this feudal mansion had something of the regions below in its aspect. The gloomy and depressing effect which a sepulchral chamber inside the pyramids would produce on a visitor, was in this place experienced by all of us.

It required some time before I could accustom my eyes to the dim light of the apartments, and this circumstance served to excite in me a feeling of curiosity, as Koordish palaces are rare things to meet with. The only objects I could at length detect in the room were two cupboards of clumsily carved oak nestled in the wall. Besides these, a shelf skirted the walls all

around and supported a collection of brass plates and dishes, genuine specimens of barbaric grandeur. On seeing this display of finery, Xenophon's description was realized. The words by which that writer informs the reader of this peculiar custom of the Karduks were now transformed into facts before me. "The houses," he says, "were provided with a large quantity of brass dishes."*

Though on a small scale, on the whole this place appeared to me a good sample of the mansions of the barons of old. The Bey's son partook of the copious dinner which was served to us at night. In the course of conversation the young man explained to me the cause of his father's absence from the house. The Pasha of Mush had thrown him into prison as a preliminary measure in order to strip him of the feudal property which had belonged to their family for ages past. He added that the Shekh, whose residence we had passed on the road, was his great-uncle, and that, as he was a very influential man, the Pasha would not dare to touch him. He then attempted to solicit my protection, thinking that I might obtain for his father the mediation of the Pasha of Van in the matter. The poor fellow was not aware that the Pasha of Van had himself very likely a number of victims more to fleece on his own account.

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* Xenophon, "The Retreat," Book iv. chap. i.

On the following morning we rose early, took our breakfast, and set out in the freshness of the morning air. Our host and his attendants accompanied us out of the residence, whilst the women stood at the end of one of the corridors in order to wish us farewell. This bold step was rather a violation of the etiquette in vogue with ladies of the harem in other parts of Turkey, but this was an exceptional case, as the object of the ladies evidently was to reiterate the request which the son had already preferred on behalf of his father. Luckily, as I did not understand Koordish, I contrived to get clear by nodding and making abundant selams to the fair petitioners, from the midst of whom I managed to extricate myself, though rather confused. A pair of red boots for the son, six or seven handkerchiefs for the harem, together with some few piastres for the servants, was what we left as a sort of compensation for the trouble we had entailed upon these kind people during a night's stay. Leaving the residence our party entered the village, and descending into the little valley, we took the road which, passing by the western extremity of the small Lake of Nazik, leads to the Lake of Van.

CHAPTER V.

Lake Nazik—View of the Lake of Van—The Village of Kazmuk—Armenian Girls—The Road to Tedvan—Caravan of Pedestrians—Tedvan—Description of the Road to Ortab—Ortab—Sorp—The Harbour—Vessels on the Lake.

AT a short distance from Pirun the mountains which separate the plateau of Lake Van from the basin of the Euphrates rise abruptly, affording access only through narrow and difficult passes. Our journey this day was an arduous one, and especially so to the harem, as their maghfehs encountered great difficulties in climbing the steep acclivities of this mountainous country. The scenery is here of a wild and rough aspect; the deep ravines are covered with thick masses of shrubs and thorny plants; the higher regions are bare and of a rocky nature. The distance we had to traverse in order to attain the shores of the lake of Nazik was not more than ten miles; however, it took full five hours for our caravan to get over it. On the way we did not meet with a single sign that this region was peopled by any race. Following the descent on the further slope of the mountains, we found a suitable halting place on the banks of a rivulet whose course we were following.

Here the whole of the caravan alighted in order to allow some rest to our weary quadrupeds, as well as for the purpose of taking our midday repast, which a civilized party under more favourable circumstances would have styled luncheon.

Skirting the banks of the stream, we continued our route towards Lake Nazik, which was now close at hand, as another hour's travelling would bring us in sight of it. Moved by that natural feeling of curiosity which impels the traveller from one discovery to another, I resolved on leaving Beheram in charge of the luggage and of his *Huris*, and set out at a quick pace in the direction of the lake. It was not long before I came within sight of Lake Nazik, as it can be descried from a distance reposing in the midst of an amphitheatre of hills, the whole of the landscape presenting those charms peculiar to lake scenery, be it in Scotland or Switzerland.

While I was hastily cantering, intent in the meantime on examining the various features which the panorama displayed before me, a group of filthy peasants, men, women, and children, appeared all at once on the road. Startled at this sight, I slackened my steps and began to observe attentively these interesting creatures, whom I thought as worthy subjects of observation as any lake, river, or chain of mountains. Misled from what I had heard of their customs, I took these people for a roving band of tho-

rough-bred nomadic Koords. Having my mind full of them I was naturally curious to meet with some good models of the species. Since our departure from Erzerum, that is, five days' journey, all the villages we had seen were inhabited by a mixture of Armenians and half-domesticated Koords. Though in the very heart of Koordistan, the Koords seemed to have evaporated, for nowhere could they be detected. At last I thought I had caught them, and imagined I should now see them body and soul before me.

Unfortunately I was deceived in my expectations, as the driver who accompanied me soon gave me to understand that those ragged individuals were nothing else but *Tchingianehs*, or gipsies. This disappointment was enough to irritate a calmer temper than mine; and under the influence of the feelings of the moment they appeared to greater disadvantage than they otherwise would. On the whole they were good imitations of their kinsmen who are often to be met with in the proximity of the moors and heaths throughout England. The roving Bohemians or gipsies of Koordistan and Turkey in general, being more primitive, are deprived of those advantages of civilization enjoyed by their European brethren. Instead of driving about from place to place on vans, carts, or other kinds of vehicles, here they go about barefooted and half naked. Without troubling myself, however, any further about them, I resumed my canter towards the lake, which I was not long in reaching.

The point of the lake which I had attained was the southern shore, where the beach is low and flat, being a continuation of the valley which the caravan was following. On arriving close to the water I got off my horse and began to walk along the shore, reconnoitring the lake and its environs as far as a superficial and hasty survey would allow. The first thing which I tried to ascertain was the nature of its water. This I found to be clear, sweet, and therefore drinkable. The beach on this side of the lake was formed of rolled pebbles of good size, and the same formation extended far under water. Lake Nazik is richly provided with fish, having a large stock of trout, delicious to the taste, and weighing about three or four pounds each. On a subsequent visit to it during the fishing season, the flesh of the trout newly caught furnished our picnic with a delicacy of the highest order. The fish is caught only at one period of the year, towards the end of May, when swarms of them rush to the rivulets tributary to the lake, where they deposit their eggs. During the rest of the year the inhabitants suppose that the fish entirely disappears, retiring from existence, to come back nevertheless as numerous as ever next season. This is the reason why no attempts are made by the people of the country to establish a permanent system of fishery, which would add a useful contribution to their means of subsistence. Fishing-rods, hooks, baits, nets, and other such contrivances are

entirely unknown in this part of the world. In the proper place I will describe the method employed in this country in order to catch the fish.

The panorama offered by Lake Nazik and its environs is exceedingly picturesque. Though deprived of bold and dazzling features, the whole of this landscape seems to be pervaded by a calm and sweet air of romantic repose. The smooth and quiet surface of the water reflects like a mirror the outlines and varying tints of the surrounding landscape. A series of rocky hills, clothed with scattered verdure, form a circle all round the lake, presenting with their valleys and ridges a variety of darker and lighter shades of remarkable effect. On the eastern shore a long and narrow promontory projects towards the middle of the lake, adding greatly to the charms of the scenery. The village of Nazik can be seen on that neck of land, embellished by the slender poplars which cover it with their shade. There are only about fifteen or twenty dwellings in this village. Lake Nazik is of an oval form, and its greatest length from north to south may be reckoned at ten or twelve miles. The tributary streams which serve to supply the lake are five in number, while its waters find an outlet by two streams, one of which flows to the Euphrates in the proximity of Lissa, and the other runs into the lake of Van close to the town of Akhlat. By an approximative computation I think I am pretty near the mark in stating that Lake

Nazik is more than five hundred feet higher than the lake of Van, and therefore 6000 feet above the sea.

In the midst of my survey and contemplations I was overtaken by the rest of the caravan, my fellow-travellers being not long in joining me on the shores of the lake. Everyone, even the beasts of burden, seemed rejoiced at meeting in nature a change so cheerful and exhilarating. Beheram's daughter asked with an infantine simplicity whether this lake was not the lake of Van, which she had been so long expecting to see. Such a geographical error of the pretty blunderer became a subject of mirth to me, as well as to her papa, who, assuming a magisterial tone, informed his daughter of her mistake. "Khanum,"* I then added, with the object of prolonging the hilarity caused by the incident, "this is not the lake of Van, it is the lake of Nazik; the lake of Van, which you will see by-and-by, is as big as a hundred little lakes like this. If the lake of Nazik were to be put side by side with the lake of Van, it would look just like a nut near a large cucumber." This little joke, rather oriental in its conception, amused everyone, especially the young lady, who, with the help of faint blushes and gentle smiles, managed to get over her otherwise unpardonable blunder.

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* *Khanum*, a title applied to ladies, married or unmarried.

A cup of coffee and a cigarette is a luxury which no man or woman in the East ever refuses whenever an attractive spot is met with. It seems with the Turk as if the charms of nature affected his physical senses more than his intellectual faculties. Fine scenery appears to react immediately on his digestive organs, when nothing can satisfy him but a good *kebab* roast), or something equally substantial. If nothing else can be got, he contents himself by absorbing aromatic liquors and perfumed vapours. Notwithstanding my cynical humour, I joined the party, willingly partaking of the coffee which Beheram had been having prepared for us all. Our stay on the shore of the lake might have been protracted for some time longer had we not been obliged to continue our route, that we might reach Kazmuk, the resting-place of the caravan for the approaching night.

We now directed our course towards a valley, the prolongation of the one we had followed on coming towards the lake, and having crossed a little rivulet skirted one of its sides. The road here gently ascended till it reached to the end of the valley, where the ridges divide the basin of Nazik from that of Lake Van. Our guides had announced that we should not be long before, seeing the lake as from the top of the hill, it would present itself before us. With my usual impatience I hastened the march, quickly clearing the tract of ground which still hid from our sight

the much longed-for panorama. As I gradually ascended, the snowy heads of the Subhan, the Arduz, and the other Hakkiari mountains began to appear; then by degrees their dark-grey skirts and secondary ridges emerged one by one from afar; and at last an immense surface of water appeared with a magic effect in the middle of the scenery, extending in some directions as far as the eye could reach. To the south the imposing mass of the Hakkiari mountains displays its high summits and bold outlines contrasted with the various tints of the horizon, while its sides fall precipitously towards the shore of the adjacent lake. Looking straight to the east, the mountains which domineer the plain of Van can be faintly perceived, forming a thin dark line. Northwards, on the left side of the panorama, the white and lofty head of the Subhan-dagh commands the view, and seems to rival in grandeur the more distant range of its Hakkiari competitors. The Subhan is peculiar in shape, being flat on the top and having the form of a pudding. Towards the base its circumference spreads far and wide, forming at its further extremity a graceful curve, which slowly falls to the level of the plains below, and from thence lowers itself gradually to the lake. From that point, going eastward, the surface of the water is lost in the horizon, and seems to be a boundless ocean.

Comparing the panorama offered by the lake of Van with the many landscapes and varied scenery I have

happened to see in the course of my roving life, I found that a great resemblance existed between the view of the Subhan-dagh with the villages and cultivated lands which embellish the surrounding country, and Mount Vesuvius with its skirts stretching as far as Torre-del-Greco. The parallel may appear an odd one, but in order to judge of its truth one must have seen both views, and I have no doubt that many would then be of my opinion. A thing which was, however, deficient in the whole of this scenery, was that rich azure tint which nature seems to have given as dowry to the skies of Italy and Greece. Though the weather was very fine and bright at the moment I was admiring the Armenian landscape, *un je ne sais quoi* was evidently wanting to elevate this scenery to the level of a Bosphorus. Beheram-Agha and his family enjoyed the view in their own way. They found it magnificent. The father, who had had the opportunity of visiting Stambul at several periods, was of opinion that on the whole the lake of Van looked like the Sea of Marmora when seen from Constantinople. The comparison was not at all a bad one, as the mountains of Brussa on the Sea of Marmora produce the effect of the Hakkiari mountains on the other side of the lake.

The Subhan-dagh holds a high position in the minds of the inhabitants of the country in consequence of the traditions connected with it, its importance in this respect corresponding to its pre-eminence over the in-

ferior ranges which circle round it. According to old traditions the Subhan seems to have played an important part during the diluvian catastrophe. It is universally believed that the dove carrying the branch of olive to Father Noah met him while floating above the lake of Van. When the ark first touched ground, it is said to have struck on the top of Mount Subhan. As, however, the ground there was not yet dry enough to allow Noah and his crew to conveniently land their numerous and varied cargo, the ark steered from thence in the direction of Mount Ararat, where a sufficiently good landing-place was at last found. At present the table-land on the summit of the Subhan contains a lake which must have been the crater of an extinct volcano.

The village of Kazmuk was within sight whilst our caravan descended towards the lake, following a southern direction. Kazmuk is an Armenian village, counting some fifty or sixty dwellings, more in the style of houses than any of those we had met with since our departure from Erzerum. Though we might have gone on as far as Tetvan, it was agreed that we should stop the night at Kazmuk, where the accommodations are of a better sort and the inhabitants are better provided for and richer. Everyone having been billeted according to the arrangements made by the chief of the village, and the order for the speedy execution of several fowls being issued, I went strolling about the village with the view of gratifying my

taste for researches. As regards ancient remains, there was a very old-looking building on one side of the village before a kind of open square. The building consisted of two large halls, having a wall of separation between them. Their common roof was vaulted, and the walls were constructed of large rough stones. The style and structure of this building belonged evidently to a remote period. This place serves now as a sort of depôt where the inhabitants store a large portion of their crops and produce. In other parts of the village some marble capitals and other fragments of antiquity are to be met with before the doors of the houses, half buried in the ground. Pushing my investigations still further, I ventured to throw a glance into the houses, where the female element was ready to repel the attack of any scrutinizing and inquisitive eye. However, a military uniform is a powerful instrument, which often succeeds in getting access into unexplored sanctuaries in spite of all obstacles. The houses which I was able to enter were poor in construction, and deprived of that substantial ease and comfort which the dwellings of the peasantry in England generally possess; but neatness in poverty is an incontestible merit with the Armenians.

While I was thus reconnoitering the houses in rather a summary way, a number of female voices chanting a primitive kind of melody struck my ears

and attracted my attention. I at once directed my steps to the spot from whence the sound had arisen. To my surprise and delight I found a multitude of children and women standing before the wide-open door of a house in which a chorus of young lasses was singing. Having inquired of the bystanders what this musical party meant, I was told that it was a festival in honour of a girl who had just been betrothed. On my getting access into the room where the performance was going on, the sight of a stranger produced a general commotion in the midst of both singers and dancers, some of them shouting and others hiding themselves the best way they could. The remonstrances of some of the people, as well as my own exhortations, succeeded at last in establishing order, and the fair musicians and ballet-dancers were induced to go on with their entertainment.

The sight offered by the different groups of young people was of a lively and interesting nature. Blue and scarlet were the predominant colours, as the greater part of the women and girls had selected them for their jackets and large trowsers. The hair-dress of the most conspicuous among them consisted of a small round bonnet, ornamented with a chain of silver coins, which was worn sliding over the forehead. The betrothed as well as the dancers wore large silver ear-rings, and a huge necklace consisting of a lot of old

silver and copper coins, an ornament which did not add much to their natural graces. As far as physical beauty is concerned, I must say that I felt rather disappointed. Some of the girls had highly coloured cheeks, good eyebrows and hair, but none classical features. The dance was going on while I was making my investigations, the chorus stimulating the ballet, and the ballet encouraging the singers.

I was not, however, to be left unpunished for having thus ventured on forbidden ground. The dancing-girls soon indicated to me the propriety of my paying my footing. One of the dancers, a jolly and merry-looking lass between sixteen and eighteen, made a clever sort of *pirouette*, at the end of which she found herself kneeling respectfully before me. The honour was too great; and, to augment my confusion, the eyes of the whole circle were significantly turned upon me. There was of course no other way of getting out of the scrape but by submitting to ransom myself with good-humour. I took out, therefore, from my pocket a silver coin, and wetting it in my mouth, stuck it on the forehead of the girl who was passively waiting for her *bakhshish*. The first one thus disposed of, a second took her place and compelled me by the same ceremonial to pay her likewise a contribution. As matters were growing rather tedious, and being justly alarmed at the possibility of seeing the whole

of the assembly, dancers, singers, and all, one after the other, kneel before me, I thought it expedient to decline such an honour by not remaining in the place a moment longer.

On returning to my lodgings I related the event to Beheram, who had been wondering what had become of me all the while. Our meal was served soon after my arrival. I remarked in all the villages where we had happened to stop at night, that there seemed to be no deficiency of the necessary articles of food. Wheat, flour, butter, eggs, and fowls were more or less plentiful. Though badly clad, and deprived of domestic comforts and wealth, the people of this part of the world are seldom without the means of subsistence; something to eat can always be found. As for the strangers that may happen to alight at any village, the plan generally adopted, with a view of providing for their food, as well as for the keep of their horses, is this:—The Kiaïa of the village receives the guests in his own house, which in nine cases out of ten is the largest and the best in the place; but to obtain a dinner for them, he sends a summons to the family upon whom devolves that day the duty of providing for the maintenance of the newly arrived strangers, every family being by turns expected to fulfil the duties of hospitality.

On the next morning, which was the seventh day

of our journey, we departed from Kazmuk and directed our course to the south-west, following the highway which leads to Tetvan. This road skirts the declivity of the Nemrud Mountains, a chain which forms the western boundary of the plateau of Van. The country is here flat; and the ground is adapted for cultivation, though entirely deprived of trees and vegetation. While descending towards Tetvan, we met on the way a caravan of Armenian peasants, about a hundred in number, who were going to Kazmuk. These pedestrians were marching at a good pace, in groups more or less compact, leaving behind them some of their straggling companions. The usual selams were, as a matter of course, exchanged between our caravan and theirs. Having inquired of them whither they were bound, some profound bass voices undertook to satisfy our curiosity by shouting "Stambulah, Stambulah," a cry which gave us to understand that the poor fellows had undertaken a tour on foot to Constantinople. These troops of Armenian peasants go periodically in the spring from Van to the Turkish capital, and *vice versâ*.

As the ravages of the Koords and the extortions of the pashas leave scarcely any resources to commerce and industry, the Armenians, being an industrious and thriving people, are continually emigrating to the capital of the empire, where they get in the way of making money—honestly or otherwise, chiefly other-

wise—and of gaining a livelihood. Many trades and professions are there open to their exertions. Great many of them become masons, and form the working masses employed in knocking down and constructing kioshks and palaces, in obedience to the caprice of the Sultan or of some Pasha. Generally speaking, the greatest part of the new buildings, either public or private, which of late years have been erected in Pera, Galata, and Stambul, have been constructed by Armenian workmen. The Armenian peasants furnish, likewise, a large contingent to the *khamals* (porters) of Constantinople. Those amongst them who are more crafty and wide awake aspire to more lucrative callings, and get employed as keepers of shops and stores, or become servants in the harems of the wealthy. These servants are known under the denomination of *kaïvass*, and are entrusted with the out-door service of the harem. In that capacity a sharp Armenian—and there are few who are not so—manages to collect a good booty within the space of a few years.

This great and constant emigration of the male population to the capital has for result that the villages of Armenia are almost entirely peopled by women. Their husbands and brothers leave them at home to take care of their fields and property. The families manage to subsist with the produce of the soil, while the men accumulate wealth in Constantinople or else-

where. At different periods, they come to see their relatives, bringing with them the fruits of their earnings. The male population that remains in the villages consists only of those who are strictly necessary to protect the families and to help in the tillage of the fields.

As we were going on, we began to perceive before us the village of Tetvan, with its smiling valley bordering the gulf, and the Nemrud mountains in the background. Tetvan is at a distance of three hours from Kazmuk, a journey which we were not long in getting over, as the road was easy and comfortable. On approaching the village, our caravan was directed towards a green and charming lawn bordering the lake. This was the most convenient spot for a halting place, and there, therefore, we alighted. Some of our people went in the meantime to the village with the view of fetching what could be found in the way of provisions. They were not long in returning, bringing with them some milk and eggs, and the chief of the village, a thin and tall old man. Without omitting any of the ceremonies of oriental etiquette, the old Armenian presented himself, and expressed his regret that his village had nothing better to offer than the few things he had brought with him. On my inquiring whether there was any honey to be found in the place, he answered that the inhabitants were so poor, that honey

was too great a luxury for them to indulge in. The gardens which I saw formed their only wealth, some fruits and a little crop being all they had to live upon. Tetvan is a small place, consisting only of about twenty or thirty houses. Between the spot where we were standing and the shores of the lake, a steep hill rises abruptly in the shape of a sugar-loaf, domineering the village as well as the adjacent orchards and fields. On the top stand the ruins of an old castle, which dates from the early epoch of the Armenian kingdom.

Our stay at Tetvan was a short one. A little above an hour was enough to explore the place and to take some refreshment. Jumping into the saddle again, we continued therefore to advance on our journey, and followed the road which skirts the south-western extremity of the lake. This road is by far the prettiest and pleasantest that we had happened to meet with in this part of the world, passing like an avenue through a thick wood of hazel trees and laurels. The lonely and desolate scenery through which we had been travelling since our departure from Erzerum was now replaced by a fertile and luxuriant country. The villages too, which had been so scarce before, began now to appear on all sides, giving life to the general aspect of the landscape. One could be perceived in front of us, to the south, and another on the right of the road, both very pretty.

In that direction the Nemrud mountains give access to a valley of historical celebrity, namely, that of Bitlis, through which the expedition of the ten thousand Greeks effected its retreat under the command of Xenophon. The route followed by his army was parallel to the Euphrates, and at a distance of only three hours from our road.

On getting round the other side of the gulf the country became still more broken and picturesque. The road passes here through fertile gardens, then in full bloom, and crosses a stream whose clear waters pour into the lake. The broken character of the ground soon disappeared however, and we were not long in finding ourselves at the foot of a steep ascent. The road was now passing over the lower part of the Hakkiari chain, which falls here abruptly to the level of the lake. This mountainous region is partially clothed with woods of dwarf-oak and hazel, but where the mountains recede from the shores of the lake, fertile valleys, smiling green meadows, and cultivated orchards border the little gulfs and creeks situate along the coast. Marshes covered with high and elegant weeds often adorn the shores, giving variety to the scenery. The weeds are of a very good quality, and are used by the inhabitants as a first-rate material for covering the roofs of their houses. Though the marshes are so far useful, and constitute a source of profit, they must be at the same time a cause of un-

healthiness to the population on account of the fevers they breed during the hot season.

After having gone alongside of the lake for some time we lost sight of it all at once, as the road began to deviate to the right, and led us through a series of secondary valleys and passes.* Instead of a pleasant and agreeable country, like that which borders the lake, we had now to proceed across a dreary and inhospitable tract of territory, offering a succession of ascents and descents more or less steep. It was singular that, with the disappearance of the lake, all signs of vegetation likewise disappeared; not a single tree being now to be met with throughout the whole extent of the road. Towards the evening our caravan made its entry into the village of Ortab, which occupies the centre of a desolate little plain, surrounded on all sides by high mountains. This place is at a distance of eight hours from Kazmuk. Its inhabitants bore in their looks the traces of their poverty and sufferings, the only resources which they possessed consisting of the produce of a sterile and marshy soil. In such

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* The map of Armenia and Koordistan, published in the work entitled "La Turquie sous le Règne d'Abdul-Aziz," is deficient in that part which shows the southern and western shores of the Lake of Van. My attention throughout that work had especially been drawn to the description of the country situated between the lake and the Persian frontier. In the present work the omissions have been rectified.

bad quarters as these the provisions we had brought with us were of course of great use, and we had this night to rely chiefly on them.

Early the next morning I arose with a plan in my head—a plan which I had resolved to put into execution anyhow. After some inquiries which I had been making at night of the people of the village, I had learned that the lake was not entirely deprived of the means of locomotion; that vessels, boats, and skiffs were not unknown things, and that one of those vessels was at that moment lying in the harbour of Sorp. Such precious intelligence was just of a nature both to excite my curiosity and to prompt me to action. After having pondered on the subject during a part of the night, I decided to abandon our overland itinerary, and embark the whole of the caravan on board the vessel that was now at Sorp. Accordingly I hastened to communicate this splendid idea to Beheram and the rest of my fellow-travellers. Opinions were naturally at first divergent and contrary. Those who were tired of the journey felt desirous to put an end to it speedily. Those who had more of the Oriental about them, and did not feel inclined to deviate from the route everyone was in the habit of following, showed a dislike to any such innovation. Notwithstanding this opposition I prevailed, however, in carrying the point and having my project adopted. Beheram's vote made the balance lean to my side, and decided

the question. Though a Turk and a Laz by birth, Beheram-Agha was not wanting in a certain amount of enterprising spirit which he had acquired during an adventurous life ; and what is still more curious, is the fact that he had been dreaming and speculating about the lake of Van to an extent far beyond my expectations. In his capacity as director of the salt administration, he considered that it was incumbent upon him to try to create from the lake new resources to the treasury, a scheme which could not be carried into execution without having at his disposal a small maritime establishment. He had, therefore, brought with him from Rizeh an old and experienced captain, together with two mates, who were in the meantime making themselves useful, serving him and his harem as domestics.

" Well," said Beheram, " let us go and have a look at the lake, and learn how people navigate in this country. Do you see, Bey, our Hassan-Agha, he is an old sailor, who has passed his life going about the Black Sea; he will find his way to Van, you'll see." Old Hassan then came to us and assisted us in mounting our horses. While we were crossing the marshy ground and the steep mountains near Ortab, shipping and boating were the engrossing subjects of our gossip. The most ambitious schemes were no sooner proposed than adopted. Regular lines of mail-packets from coast to

coast, lighthouses, harbours, even arsenals, were easily built, like so many castles in the air, by our merry party. Of course Hassan-Agha became now an important personage, everybody paying him the attentions due to the captain who was to take us safely to Van. Unfortunately, we were doomed to reap nothing but disappointment from our sanguine expectations, and the only benefit we derived from this adventure was that of having obtained, in exchange for our trouble, some valuable information. The road to Sorp from the mountain is very difficult, as the traveller must come down a steep descent, stumbling amongst stones and bushes. The distance between Sorp and our last night's quarters being five hours, we came within sight of the place some time before sunset. On approaching, the view of the harbour and the lake is charming. A neck of land having at its extremity a little hill surmounted by a castle in ruins stretches itself into the lake and confines the harbour to the north. The village of Sorp stands on another elevation closer to the mainland, and appears almost hidden in the midst of a thick forest of large and shadowy chestnut trees. Below the village the skirts of this hill are embellished by orchards and corn-fields. On the lake we discovered the vessel, lying close to the neck of land, on a spot which appeared to be a kind of pier or landing-place.

The caravan with the maghfehs went straight to

the village, going up the road which passes betwixt the gardens. Myself, Beheram, and some of our people directed our steps towards the spot where the vessel was remaining, and we followed the beach all along the interior of the harbour. On coming close to this vessel we were able to see at last to advantage this marvellous sample of naval architecture, the model of which must have dated from Noah's ark, and seems to have been handed over from generation to generation down to the present one. This big, clumsy ship must have been something between 150 and 200 tons. From the load water-line to the top its height was something like twenty-five feet, its length being little more than fifty feet. A single mast was erected on the forecastle, while two small scaffoldings formed the quarter-deck and the forecastle. The middle of the vessel was undecked, the whole of its frame being visible. Its construction was as coarse and primitive as could well be imagined. As for its propelling apparatus, this singular vessel had nothing to rely upon but a small oblong sail stuck on a pole, and four long poles flattened at one extremity, which were employed as substitutes for oars. The captain and crew were exactly suited to the whole concern. The commander was a corpulent and stupid-looking man, having the appearance rather of a cook than of a sailor, and his mates were two slovenly and sleepy-looking fellows.

On our shouting to the people in the vessel, the captain, who was standing on the deck, made us a sign to come on board. The only way to get there was by walking upon a plank some thirty or forty feet long, the extremities of which rested one on shore and the other on the bulwark. The passage was rather perilous, the board being placed so high from the sea-level as to make one feel giddy. The captain's invitation and my exhortations were of no avail with Beheram-Agha, who could not decide to risk his existence in so dangerous an undertaking. Crossing over this sort of thoroughfare seemed to him almost as difficult as crossing the Bridge of Sirhat to Mahomed's Paradise. He therefore declined following me on board, on the ground that it was not worth risking one's neck for the sake of seeing such a marvellous specimen of naval architecture. I therefore ventured on by myself, and actually succeeded in reaching the ship safely, though at one moment I had almost lost my balance. The vessel was quite empty, and the captain told me that he was to take in a cargo of wood, a dwarfish kind of oak, to be conveyed to Van. I asked the fellow then whether it was possible for him to carry our caravan over to the town, as we had all been growing very tired of our land journey. The captain's answer was that the thing was feasible enough ; he had already some years ago carried the furniture and horses of a Pasha from

Van to Akhlat. He added, however, that it would not be possible for him to start before to-morrow, as he was expecting some instructions from a Kelesh Bey, proprietor of the ship. As for the terms of passage required, he asked rather a prodigious sum for this part of the world; five pounds was the price which he seemed to consider as reasonable. The delay thus interposed by the captain to our departure, as well as the high terms which he required, made me give up all thought of undertaking a voyage on the lake, and decided me on wishing good-bye to the smart commander.

On getting on shore I related to Beheram what I had heard and what I had seen, so that, notwithstanding his sanguine expectations, he too agreed to continue our route by land. We then followed the path that leads to the village, where our people had in the meantime been making themselves at home. Fifty at the outside is the number of houses which constitute the village of Sorp, the chief importance of which is derived from the adjoining harbour. The harbour of Sorp does not serve for any other purpose than that of loading the wood necessary to supply the city of Van with fuel. There is no doubt that if a system of steam navigation were to be established between the different towns and districts situated on the shores of the lake, this harbour would then acquire importance and prosperity.

Sorp is inhabited by a few Armenian peasants, whose means of subsistence consist chiefly of the produce of their fields and gardens. Some of these fellows, who had happened to visit Constantinople, came to join us in the evening, and entertained the company with full accounts of their doings while in the capital, and of their friends and connexions there. After the breaking up of the party we retired at an early hour to rest. While *en route* a few hours' good sleep will always be found more valuable than the most entertaining gossip.

CHAPTER VI.

Road to Nusheh — Koordish Shepherds — Our Halting-place— Koordish Horsemen—Nusheh—Interior of a House—Discovery of Ancient Relics—Vastan—The Isle of Akhtamar—Skiffs—Enghir—Edremit—Arrival at Van—View of Van.

WITH the dawning of day our caravan arose, ready to undertake the fatigues of a journey which was now nearly drawing to an end. It had already been announced that this day's labour would be much harder than any it had as yet been our lot to undergo. From Sorp to Nusheh the distance was reckoned to be not less than nine hours. On getting out of the village the caravan had to follow a part of the road by which we had been passing the preceding day, and to remount the steep hills which rise above Sorp. After having ascended to a certain distance, we joined the main road which leads directly to Van, then turning to the left, eastward, we came within sight of a bay. The road here gradually descends towards the lake, and skirts in many places its rocky and picturesque shores.

The difficulty of the road about here kept the maghfehs and the luggage at some distance behind.

Myself and Beheram-Agha were quietly taking the lead and admiring the beauties of the landscape, when several stones began to roll upon us from the side of the mountain. This seeming at first accidental, we hastened our pace with a view of getting clear of a dangerous spot; but no sooner had we advanced a hundred yards further on, than more stones began to fall all around us, whilst voices could distinctly be heard coming from the heights above. The danger was real, there could be no doubt about it, especially as our caravan people had remained too far behind. Alarmed at the prospect of being lapidated to death before the journey was at an end, I shouted to Beheram, showing him a little creek towards which we both made a rush, and where we succeeded in finding shelter. The stones continued, however, to fall, but fortunately for us the rocky canopy under which we were admirably protected us. Not knowing what might happen, I resolved, as we could see nothing of the caravan, on firing two shots of my revolver, which our people would take as signals of distress. The signal was soon answered by our men, and several detonations of their firearms announced a speedy relief. Accordingly, some of them hastened, at a quick pace, to the spot where we were, and the drivers and train soon effected their junction with us. Without losing any time in explaining what had occurred, I picked out about eight of our best men

and climbed up the mountain, in order to chastise the ruffians who had been thus perpetrating an attempt on our lives.

As was to be expected, on ascending the mountain we found the ground quite clear of the enemy, and no trace of a human being was to be discovered. A herd of sheep and goats grazing about the mountain side was, however, evidence enough to prove that the Koordish shepherds entrusted with their care were the culprits we were looking for. Extending our researches we advanced as far up towards the summit as it was possible to venture safely without compromising our retreat, but no practical result was obtained, as the shepherds had either got out of reach, or were concealed somewhere in the neighbourhood. The shepherds in Koordistan and Armenia are Koords; this race being exclusively devoted to the care of the flocks, just as the Armenians have reserved to themselves the tillage of the soil. The Koordish shepherd is a suspicious and dangerous individual, it being difficult to say whether he is more of a shepherd than a robber. Roving about the country with his flock he is always on the look-out, ready to catch sight of the smallest object and to hear the faintest sound. The far range of his vision, and the acuteness of his hearing, are wonderful, and nothing can escape his vigilance. No sooner does he detect anything worth noticing than he either pounces like a bird of

prey on the victim, or runs to inform his tribe. Runs, however, is not the word by which accurately to express the rapidity with which the Koordish shepherd conveys the intelligence to his companions and people. The thing is done instantaneously, almost as quickly as any telegraphic wire could do it. During my stay in Koordistan, and while operating against the tribes, I had many opportunities of witnessing the working of their system of telegraphic correspondence; but I must confess that I was unable to understand how it was carried on.

Being warned by those of our party who were well acquainted with the state of the country, I put a stop to the pursuit, and hastened to rejoin those who had remained all this while at the head of the luggage and of the female contingent. The caravan was rallied again, forming a compact mass, which is by far the safest order of march to be adopted while making a journey through a country like this. The time for halting and taking some respite being now near, we directed our course towards a spot situated on the banks of a stream which flows into the lake near the village of Shemzenan. This place was admirably selected for the purpose, as it possessed the charms of pretty scenery, while affording a shelter from the violent wind which had been blowing since the morning. The quiet and motionless waters of the lake had lost their smiling appearance, and presented

a foaming and agitated surface. As if impatient of remaining within their limits, the waves were dashing with strength against the rocks and cliffs bordering the shore, whereas over the flat beaches of the adjoining bays and coves they were flowing with less violence.

After having taken some rest and restored our strength, we emerged from the depth of the little ravine and resumed our onward march. The wind being as strong as ever we were not sorry to lose sight of the lake, which began to disappear now behind a series of intervening hills placed between the road we were following and the coast. The storm which was agitating the lake made everyone of our caravan think of the state we should have been in at this very moment, if we had had the ill luck to take our passage on board the famous ship. There is no doubt that while rolling in the middle of the lake we should have sincerely repented having left our overland route. Some reflexions of this nature were being interchanged between Beheram-Agha and myself, when a body of horsemen, some ten or fifteen in number, made its appearance before us. Their spears and their warlike bearing showed that the approaching party was nothing else but a troop of Koordish horsemen. Scarlet mantle and brass helmet used to be the equipment of the Persian, Mede, and Kardukian warriors of old. Like their forefathers

the most conspicuous amongst these Koordish knights wore a scarlet mantle (harmany), which distinguished them from their servants and followers, whose mantles were of a brown tint. No ancient reminiscence, however, seems to be attached to their lofty turbans and the red morocco boots forming part of the present costume; these must be reckoned as innovations of the Mussulman era. Their lances displayed the peculiarity of having a black round ball, made of horsehair, as a substitute for the flag borne on the lances of European cavalry. A slight bow and some keen glances were exchanged by the Koords in return for our selams. Trotting away in the meantime they skirted one side of the road, and soon disappeared.

We did not reach the village of Nusheh before dark, when weary from our prolonged journey we halted at the house of a Shekh who was reckoned to be the great man of the place. The hospitable Shekh, having received intelligence of the arrival of an officer from Stambul, had hastened to meet our caravan, and to show us the way to his residence. Torches and lanterns had been prepared along the lanes of the village, and the Shekh himself, in a night-cap and night-gown, held a big lantern in his hand, and walked ahead of my horse up to his door. Here, too, alighted Beheram-Agha together with the masculine division of the caravan, while the feminine one was

directed as usual to separate quarters. The Shekh fulfilled the duties of hospitality to the satisfaction of us all, the meal which he had served before his guests being abundant and nicely prepared. To render the *menu* more stylish and select, a plate of honey and butter was laid before us. Of course such an unexpected *entremet* received a hearty welcome from our hungry circle. It required only a few instants' sharp work to sweep away the whole contents of the dish. The table once cleared, everyone laid himself down on the spot in order to take rest. As for myself, having had my hammock arranged, I hastened to climb on it, as I had been getting accustomed to do. It is almost needless to mention that the apartment which the Shekh had put at our disposal was nothing better than his stable. An elevated square platform was the place set apart for our use, where the horses and cattle of the Shekh entertained us with their company.

The morning had no sooner arrived than I set out to breathe the fresh air and to explore the village and its environs. Nusheh is but a small hamlet consisting of forty or fifty houses, inhabited by a mixed population of Armenians and Koords. This village is situated on the skirts of a small and narrow valley, covered with gardens and thickly planted with willow trees. The crops produced by the adjoining fields constitute the wealth of the inhabitants. As it was

early in the day, quantities of sheep began to rush out from the wide open doors of the different houses, taking the road to the mountains. Finding a free access to one of the dwellings just opposite to me, I ventured boldly in for the purpose of examining the interior of the house, its disposition and arrangements, as well as with the object of ascertaining the mode of life the female portion of the inhabitants lead while buried in their underground recesses. The houses which we had seen, or rather the apartments into which we had been shown, up to the present, were separate buildings expressly allotted to the reception of strangers and travellers. Curiosity now prompted me to push on my researches, putting aside all reserve and leaping over the barriers of Eastern prejudices. Taking advantage, as I said, of the door being open, I entered the house without much ceremony.

On entering I found myself in a low-roofed and narrow vestibule. Two doors, one opposite to the street door, the other lateral to it, gave entrance to the interior of the building. Not knowing which way to go, I directed my steps towards the side door, which happened at that moment to be half open. A low and dark corridor, some fifty feet in length, led me into a series of subterranean stables dimly lighted, which the inmates had just abandoned, as the ground was still strewed with straw and dung. Having had a glance

at this place, which on account of its peculiarity was not altogether void of interest for a stranger, I hastened out in order to get into the interior of the house by the other door. A large and lofty room presented itself to my sight on entering. Two women seated on the ground round a fire, and surrounded by a group of half-naked little children, formed the principal feature of the tableau. The fire-place was in the centre of the room, and consisted of a well dug in the ground two yards deep. The orifice was narrow, the width of the well enlarging as it attained a greater depth. Towards the lower part the well becomes again narrow, the bottom of it being equal to the diameter of the orifice above. This fire-place is called by the Koords *tandur*, and is nothing else but a jar of large dimensions buried in the ground. Dry dung is thrown into the *tandur*, which then becomes a first-rate fire-place, kitchen, and oven—all these compartments being combined in one simple and primitive apparatus. Just at that moment the women were busy at work preparing their morning meal. An iron bar had been put for that purpose across the orifice of the *tandur*, and a kettle was suspended from it with a chain, so as to lower it within reach of the fire. It was curious to see how those women could withstand the smoke and the flames which were coming forth from the ground like the volcanic eruption of a burning crater. The chimney by which the heat

and smoke made their exit consisted of the top window common to all Koordish dwellings.

As regards furniture, the inhabitants of these regions are very simple in their taste. A tolerably large stock of woollen carpets and quilts, several mattresses, some large leather wallets containing objects of finery and things of ordinary use, seemed to form the bulk of the furniture belonging to the inmates of the house. This stock of property was neatly piled up along the opposite wall, whence it is only removed at night when the hour of rest arrives. The house having no other room but this, its inhabitants have no choice, and must therefore all sit, eat, and sleep in the same apartment. Throughout the villages and towns of Koordistan all the members of a family sleep together. Fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, shrieking babies and coughing octogenarians, all find rest and comfort within the four walls of a dark room. To my astonishment the women of the house showed themselves very well disposed to receive a stranger in the recesses of the harem. They neither seemed to partake of the frightened and timid manners peculiar to the Armenian ladies, nor to have been trained to imitate the sham pudicity of the Turkish women. These Koordish women, far from being frightened at seeing me in the midst of them, began, on the contrary, to talk with me, answering calmly and with simplicity

the questions which I put to them concerning themselves, their children, and household. One or two men, apparently the male members of the family, stepped into the room and contributed towards furnishing me with the explanations I required.

Having been so far successful in my explorations, I was naturally emboldened to further extend my researches. A little door seemed to give access into a kind of store-room; thither, therefore, I hastened to introduce myself. The *sans-façon* manner with which I set to explore every corner of the establishment seemed rather to amuse the people of the house, who, with laughter, tried to make me understand that there was nothing worth seeing in that place, which after all was a simple store-room. Of course it was natural enough that they should think so, and no one, I am sure, would have ever imagined that in that store a most interesting historical discovery was about to be made. On entering, my eye caught sight of a *cemented cistern*, oblong in shape, having the appearance of an ancient sarcophagus. A hole perforated near one of the corners showed immediately that this vessel was used for the preparation of some liquid substance.* To the right and the left of

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* Ainsworth, in his work, "Travels in the Retreat of the Ten Thousand," mentions the fact of his having seen the plastered cisterns described by Xenophon in many of the villages throughout

this cistern were to be seen two rows of earthen jars of different sizes; the largest must have been about four feet high. The shape of these jars was so like that of the ancient Greek *amphoræ*, that they might have been mistaken for them. No specimen of this kind had as yet been met with by me in any other part of the East. The marks of age were visible on the surface of these vases, and some of them had been mended, their broken fragments being stuck together with tar.

I was naturally prompted to inquire of the people of the house for what purpose they used the cistern, and what was in the amphoræ? The answer was that almost every family throughout the country had those things. The Mussulmans make use of the cistern to extract from barley a liquor known all through the East by the name of "bozah," a fermented sort of malt liquor. Another kind of liquid is extracted from the pomegranate, and is known under the denomination of "nardenk;"

Koordistan and Syria. According to Ainsworth, these cisterns are buried under ground, and their mouths are closed by a single large stone. It seems to me that Ainsworth has mistaken these underground stores, in which the inhabitants of these regions have always been in the habit of keeping and concealing their provisions and wealth, as being the cisterns mentioned by Xenophon. It is not likely, however, that the inhabitants should have ever thought of keeping their wine within the damp walls of a cistern without any bottle or cask to preserve it. It is notorious that wine would soon deteriorate under such conditions.

this gives a very refreshing beverage for the summer season. Vinegar and pickles are likewise, they added, prepared inside the cistern. The Armenian giaours, my interlocutors said humorously, employ their cisterns to make wine and "raki" (whisky). As for the jars, they serve to preserve and keep those liquors. These answers did not, as yet, satisfy my curiosity. Something more I thought could be learned, and therefore went on with my examination. "Whence," I asked, "did you get those jars; is there any place about here where such things are made?" "God knows who made them," answered one of the fellows, giving a slovenly shake of the shoulders, "since we were born we have had them here; our fathers and forefathers have made use of them just as we do."

These words of the Koord were enough to throw a gleam of light over my mind, and to carry me back to the remotest period of historical record. I recollected that Xenophon, while relating the retreat of the Ten Thousand, mentions* that, on marching through the Kardukian mountains, his army was stationed in villages where the houses were so well provided with wine that this liquor was kept in cemented cisterns. Stimulated by these recollections I set myself eagerly to examine the jars as well as the cistern, not omitting

* Xenophon, "The Retreat of the Ten Thousand," book iv. chap. ii.

to have a taste of the liquors which they contained. I requested for that purpose that one or two of the jars should be opened. The liquors I found in them were, as the people of the house had been stating, *bozah* and *nardenk*. The former has the taste and appearance of malt liquor. *Nardenk* is a liquor extracted from pomegranate: it is of an acid taste, rather agreeable; mixed with water it is a cooling beverage. All that I thought worth seeing here once examined, I inquired of the people who were with me whether it was possible to get some of the wine which the Armenians of the place are in the habit of drinking. On receiving an affirmative answer I left the house, accompanied by one of the Koords, and directed myself, under his guidance, towards one of the neighbouring Armenian houses. On my way I came across Beheram-Agha, who, having seen me disappear at an early hour, had been wondering what had become of me all this while. "The caravan is on the point of starting," said Beheram, "we are waiting for you." "Well," I replied, "I won't be a minute before coming; will you come and have a drop of wine with me? We will drink a viva together." Beheram followed me, but one could easily perceive from his countenance that the poor man did not understand how I could desire to drink wine at such an hour of the day. We entered the house, into which the guide introduced us without much formality. On my requesting the proprietor to

let us have a taste of his wine, the Armenian went to open the door of a room of the same style as the store-room I had seen. Thither I followed him, accompanied by Beheram, and there the same cistern and amphoræ presented themselves before us. The Armenian poured out some wine into a tumbler, and handed it over to me. The colour of this liquor had something of the ruby tint, though it was not quite clear and limpid; the taste was of that character peculiar to eastern wines in general; but I must confess that, though not a connoisseur, I did not find any remarkable flavour about it.

Xenophon, who mentions, as we said, the existence of cisterns full of wine, states likewise, in other parts of his work, that he had met in the Armenian and Kardukian villages with a kind of wine exceedingly fragrant and nice.* In another passage the Greek historian speaks also of a kind of malt liquor kept in earthen jars.† My researches have, I think, put beyond doubt the accuracy of Xenophon's statements, and are of a nature to show the historical, geographical, and ethnological importance which is to be attached to the accounts handed down to posterity by that illustrious writer. Every phrase, every word of his, is found, after an interval of twenty-three centuries, to be of the most

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* "The Retreat of the Ten Thousand," book iv. chap. iv.

† *Ibid.*, book iv. chap. v.

scrupulous exactitude, leaving no room for doubt and controversy. Since Xenophon, no one has been in a position to give a faithful and detailed description of Koordistan and Armenia. In 1833 Captain Wilbraham, of the East India Company's service, published an account of his journey through those regions; but the description given by that officer is summary and incomplete. He states in his work that he felt disappointed in finding that the wines of Armenia were not so fragrant and agreeable as Xenophon asserts them to be. He regrets likewise not having been able to detect any traces of the malt liquor and of the earthen jars mentioned in the Greek historian's narration. As for the cemented cisterns, Wilbraham seems to have been entirely ignorant of them.

The different parts of Xenophon's description are now proved to be correct, and are placed beyond any doubt. That Wilbraham should have failed in ascertaining the exactitude of the Greek writer's statements is not surprising, for our English traveller, while passing through the country, had neither the time nor the material force necessary to carry through a careful and effective survey. Without those means, what can be seen and learnt in eastern countries amounts to little. Xenophon, accompanied by his ten thousand, was evidently placed under the most advantageous circumstances, having leisure and power enough to explore thoroughly the districts and

villages through which he forced a passage. The prestige of command afforded to me, likewise, a free access to every place, and furnished me with an opportunity of piercing the veil of Oriental seclusion. I must add that these relics of ancient customs are not confined to Armenia, but are also to be found in many parts of the province of Erzerum, which in Xenophon's time was inhabited by the Chalybs and the Taoques.

What an admirable example does the itinerary of the Ten Thousand offer to military men, of the manner in which an officer ought to reconnoitre the country in which an army is operating! Though in the midst of one of the most perilous campaigns recorded in the annals of war, though himself an actor in one of the most heart-stirring dramas in which it has been the lot of a soldier to be engaged, Xenophon's mind appears to have been as clear, and his powers of observation as keen, as those of any man could be. The smallest details, the most trifling incidents, were noticed by the indefatigable mind of the soldier-historian. The cemented cisterns, the excellent wines, the fermented malt liquor, the earthen jars—nothing has escaped his vigilant eye. When one happens to meet with any monument or object with which a vanished world is associated, a sentiment difficult to describe inflames the mind, the imagination flies back to a bygone period, and the body itself experiences

almost the contact of nations and races of the past. Labouring under the effect of these influences, I imagined I saw in the midst of my researches Xenophon present in the houses of the Kardukians of Nusheh, and his Arcadian and Athenian soldiery living in body and soul before my eyes.

To find in our days amongst the populations of Koordistan and Armenia the same peculiar customs and manners which characterized their forefathers, is a fact of high historical importance. It serves to prove that, while the nations which live in other parts of the globe have been undergoing an almost complete transformation, in the dormant East things have remained at a standstill. One faith has dethroned, one conqueror has subdued, the other; the Medes, the Armenians, and the Kardukians of old still exist, however, in their posterity. As in geology, elements known under the denomination of *fossil débris* seem to defy the destructive effects of time and of chemical decomposition, so in the history of nations there are customs and uses which, as *fossil débris* of history, survive social catastrophes and the decomposition of races.

In the meantime, whilst I was pursuing my investigations, the caravan had been taking the lead of me, and I was compelled to hasten to rejoin the party. The road by which we had to travel in order to reach Enghir, our next halting-place, passed through an easy and

picturesque country. While proceeding along the coast a variety of landscapes succeeded each other. At intervals the mountains of Van appeared at a distance; while at a nearer range the isles of Akhtamar and Lim, together with the adjoining cliffs, offered to the eye a series of fine and bold landscapes. The isle of Akhtamar is a barren rock which rises some hundred feet above the level of the sea. A small church, with a convent built at a very remote period, occupies a small plateau upon it. The church of Akhtamar is considered by the Armenians as a sanctuary of high repute, and a good number of pilgrims repair thither every year. The convent was now under the direction of a Bishop named Boghos Kara-bash, a very remarkable character. While bishop of Van in 1862, this prelate had managed to stir up such an agitation amongst the Armenians that at last he was himself compelled to seek shelter in the retreat of Akhtamar. The Armenian peasantry believed that the fragrance of his sanctity perfumed the atmosphere all around. The communications between this island and the mainland are kept up by means of small skiffs. Flat in shape and pointed at one end, they look very much like the canoes common amongst savages.

While skirting the extremity of a small bay we passed within a short distance of the villages of Aghauank and Vastan, the latter one lying at

the foot of a hill. The ancient castle of Vastan domineering the village, is now reduced to a heap of ruins. This castle was once the residence of the kings of Armenia. It was in good time that we attained Enghir, our journey having this day been limited to a distance of six hours. Enghir is situated on the banks of one of the most important tributaries of Lake Van, the Hoch-ab river, which has here a tolerably large volume of water. A wooden bridge served to carry our caravan to the other side of the Hoch-ab, where an avenue shaded by two rows of fine trees led us right into the village. A certain tint of civilization, rather above the Koordish standard, was visible about this place. The houses, which stood above the surface of the earth, were neatly constructed with pise. The inhabitants, to judge from their appearance, seemed to enjoy greater ease and comfort than those of the country through which we had been passing. Enghir counts a population of about a thousand souls, entirely Armenian, a considerable number for this part of the world. Here our quarters were, of course, much preferable to those we had been accustomed to find along the road.

On the following morning all the members of our caravan were up at an early hour, full of joy and exultation, as in five hours' time our more than weary pilgrimage was to be at an end. The route from

Enghir to Edremit skirts the cliffs which overhang here the shores of the lake. Edremit itself is a small village partly situated upon a steep acclivity rising from the beach. The lower part of the village is half concealed among shady orchards, which are bathed by the waters of the lake. On my arrival at Edremit the Adjutant-Major of my battalion, followed by two or three other officers, presented himself, congratulating me on my arrival. In the meantime I was invited to partake of a breakfast which had been prepared in a very convenient spot in one of the orchards. Thither I resorted, taking Beheram also with me, and to our great surprise we found a number of carpets spread on the grass after the Oriental fashion, and a nice table covered with a variety of dishes and an ample provision of fruits of all sorts. One or two hours were spent in this delightful spot; whence we enjoyed a splendid view of Van and its castle, while seated under the pleasant shade of apple, almond, and cherry trees. Edremit is considered by the Turks of Van as a very pleasant spot during the summer season, a capital place for picnics. Seated in these orchards, groups of Turks gratify their senses by absorbing one or two bottles of *raki* (whisky), swallowing clouds of smoke, and lying in the shade until their senses awake to consciousness. That I may not be misunderstood, I must mention that the absorption of this quantity of *raki* is not an act in which

a whole group of people takes part; but, individually, every Turk is capable of the feat.

Van, its society, the troops, the Pashas, were the various topics which formed the subject of the conversation carried on *sub tegmine fagi*. I obtained thus through my fellow-officers an insight into the state of the country, learning beforehand who was who, and what was what. The halt at Edremit was not of any length. The breakfast once over, we all got on our horses and resumed our journey. A few hundred yards beyond the village, the road leaves the rocky declivities of the Erdoz mountains and descends into the plain of Van. The ground is in some places bushy and cut-up, while in others marshy meadows border the shores of the lake. The distance between Edremit and Van being not more than two hours, it was not long before we had a distinct view of the fortress and of the surrounding panorama.

An imposing and perpendicularly cut Acropolis, rising abruptly some two hundred and fifty feet above the flat and level surface of the adjacent plain, surmounted by a row of time-blackened and dilapidated towers—such is the sight which Van offers to the traveller on approaching from the south. At the foot of the Acropolis lies the town. Nothing can, however, be seen at a distance, except the crests of the bastions and the few cupolas and minarets rising to a certain height. The view of the lake, the plain, and the

surrounding mountains is fine and grand. The plain extends three leagues to the east from the walls of the fortress, the Shar mountains limiting it with their rough mass. It is here thickly covered with flourishing gardens and nice country-seats. To the west the town is separated from the lake by a tract of flat marshy ground some fifteen hundred yards in extent. The ruins of a pier and some embankments are there to witness that in better days active trade and constant communications were kept up between Van and the countries around the lake. From south to north the plain of Van extends to five leagues, and is bounded on both sides by two ranges of hills which gradually descend towards the lake. Many villages and isolated farms are scattered over this part of the plain, into which several lateral valleys find an outlet. In the midst of all these charms of natural beauty the lake produces at a distance a magic effect; the imposing mass of its waters being girdled by several ranges of high mountains, of which the eye loses sight as they recede towards the furthest west. The Subhan mountain dominates with its venerable head all he inferior ranges, and seems to assert its right as the lord of the creation in the midst of this panorama.

Our journey being now at an end, before going any further with the description of the country it is necessary to give here some detailed account of the peculiar features and natural phenomena which render the lake

of Van remarkable. Lake Van, known to the ancients under the name of *Arsissea Palus*, has been considered by many geographers worthy, on account of its vast extent, of the name of the Sea of Van. From its north-eastern extremity to its furthest point to the south-west (the bay of Tetvan), the lake has an extent of twenty-eight leagues. The depth of water varies. In one of my surveying excursions I found a depth of eighty-four feet at a distance of two miles to the west, in the latitude of Van. The water of the lake is saltish and very disagreeable to the taste, containing a strong proportion of carbonate of soda. The northern and eastern shores are generally flat and low, except where the lake is domineered by the Subhan-dagh. The southern shore is, on the contrary, abrupt and rocky. The principal rivers and streams that pour their waters into the lake of Van are eleven in number. Lakes Nazik and Erdjek are merely occasional tributaries, pouring into Van merely that surplus of their waters which accumulates during the rainy season. As the lake has no visible outlet anywhere, evaporation alone seems sufficient to keep its waters within the limits of a regular level. The superstition of the inhabitants leads them to believe that a catastrophe like that of the Deluge is in store for them, and that one fine day they shall find themselves submerged under the overflowing waters of the lake. In proof of this, they assert that the lake is constantly

encroaching on the adjacent country, and that many towns and villages have actually been submerged under the rising flood. At Erdish, on the northern coast, it is stated that a mosque with the whole of its minaret can be seen lying several yards below the surface of the water. Peasants and ignorant people are everywhere more or less fond of wonderful and sensational stories. This is undoubtedly one of that kind, and as such would not deserve being mentioned were it not for its originality. Lake Van is 5500 feet above the level of the sea.

The districts, *mudirlik*, situated round the lake, are six in number. These are Hoch-ab, Vastan, and Kartchikan, to the south; the district of Akhlat, to the west; Eldjivas and Erdish, to the north. Van and its neighbourhood, to the east, are under the direct administration of the governor of the province.

After Van, the most important towns situated on the borders of the lake are Erdish, Eldjivas, and Akhlat. Akhlat was in former days a flourishing town, and became the capital of one of the Mussulman kingdoms which were established in Armenia during the Middle Ages. Layard, while passing through this place, relates having visited some remarkable ruins of that epoch; for myself I regret not to have been able to see it. The population which inhabits the territories situated all around the lake of Van may be computed at two hundred thousand

souls. The produce derived from the lake is very limited, consisting of natron, which is obtained by the process of evaporation. The inhabitants all around the coast form a number of square holes, not very deep, in the sand, and fill them with the water of the lake. After evaporation has been effected, a deposit of carbonate of potash remains at the bottom, forming a solid spongy stuff which has an ashy-pale colour. This natron is employed all through the country for washing purposes, and the poor classes use it also as a substitute for soap when they go to the bath. This article is exported to a considerable extent to Mush, Diarbekir, and Aleppo, where it is used in the manufacture of soap.

The fishery of this lake is limited to one season in the year, beginning at the end of May and lasting up to the middle of June. It is at this epoch that numberless swarms of fish rush to the mouths of the rivers, tributaries of the lake, in order to deposit their eggs. During the rest of the year no fish are to be found anywhere about the lake; and the natives believe, as we have remarked in a former chapter, that the fishing season once over, the fish cease to exist. The only kind of fish to be found in the lake of Van is a sort of herring which the inhabitants are in the habit of salting, and of which they preserve a good stock, for use during the course of the year.

The exportation of the dry fish is a source of lucra-

tive commerce with the neighbouring provinces as well as with northern Persia. The fishery of the two lakes of Van and Nazik gives a yearly revenue of two thousand pounds sterling to the Turkish exchequer. The navigation on the lake is scarcely worth mentioning. A project for the establishment of steam-navigation had at one time been proposed to the Turkish government by Kilitchian, a well-known Dalmatian captain in the service of the Porte. That advantages might be derived from such a scheme is beyond doubt, as easy communications would thus be established between the different districts surrounding the lake, as well as between the two important markets of Van and Mush, which would then find themselves within convenient distance of each other. The Persian provinces of Khoi, Selmas, and Urmieh, and perhaps Tebritz too, would likewise find through the lake of Van a shorter and more convenient route to Erzerum and the Black Sea. In the event of a war between Turkey and Russia, the trade of Persia would undoubtedly find greater security by following this route than by taking the present one, which from Bayazid and Toprac-kaleh passes close to the Russian frontier, and is thus exposed to the attacks of belligerent armies.

CHAPTER VII.

Koordistan and Armenia—Their Ancient and Present Limits—Province of Van—Its Climate—Its Produce—Its Population—Its Administration and Revenue—Province of Hakkiari—Its Climate—Its Produce—Its Population and Administration—The Animal Kingdom in this Region—Source of the Tigris.

BEFORE advancing any further into the details relating to the description of this country, and to the manners and customs of the inhabitants, it is necessary to give here some general notions on the geographical position and history of Koordistan and Armenia. In the old world the name of Koordistan was unknown, as no portion of Asia went under that denomination, except a part of the Anti-Taurus (*Mountains of Hakkiari*), where the Kardukians (*Koords*) used to live. The northern part of Koordistan, which now constitutes the province of Van, used to form, in ancient geography, the eastern portion of the kingdom of Armenia. The central and southern portions of Koordistan are those countries which were known partly under the names of Assyria and Mesopotamia. As for Armenia, it is difficult to define how far the limits of that ancient kingdom

extended, the tide of conquest having at intervals restricted or enlarged its territory. In the utmost expansion of its limits, however, the Armenian kingdom reached on the north the banks of the Kur and the mountains of Lazistan; to the south the range of the Taurus; to the east Media; and to the west Cappadocia.

In modern times the contrary is the case. Instead of Koordistan being unknown, it is Armenia which fades out of the knowledge of mankind, or at least of those who rule over its destinies. In the geography of the Turkish Empire, amongst the numerous provinces submitted to the authority of the Sultan no such country as Armenia exists. *Delenda est Carthago* seems to have been the policy of the Turkish conquerors who decided on blotting out the name of Armenia, as lately the Russians have obliterated that of *Poland*, and the Turks of this day that of *Bulgaria*, which countries have been shovelled up promiscuously with the other provinces of those empires. If a Turkish Pasha had not in his service a banker or a servant of Armenian nationality, it might be that, unaware of the existence of the Armenians, his Excellency would be ignorant that such a country as Armenia ever stood on the surface of the globe. In order, therefore, to be clear in my description, I will omit any further mention of Armenia as a geographical expression, and will adopt the

generic of Koordistan for the whole of the country, so as to adapt my description to the present state of things.

Koordistan is that part of Asiatic Turkey which is comprised from north to south between Mount Ararat and the frontiers of Georgia on one side, and the neighbourhood of Bagdad on the other; while from east to west its limits may be considered to be the Persian frontier and the borders of Asia Minor and Lazistan. These limits have nothing definite in their nature, for the simple reason that there is nothing permanent and definite in the territorial distribution of the various parts of the Turkish dominions. Whole provinces and departments, with their central towns and boundaries, are subject to frequent changes in the midst of an administrative chaos. Sometimes one province absorbs another, or the limits of the one encroach on the limits of the other; while on the frontiers of Persia large districts are pulled one way by Turkish and another by Persian pretenders, never, however, receiving any definitive settlement. Up to the epoch of the Crimean war the province of Koordistan used to form a distinct Pashalik, which consisted of the present Sandjaks of Van, Bayazid, Hakkiari, and Mussul; but at that time the province of Koordistan was suppressed, the above-mentioned Sandjaks being then placed under the authority of the pasha or governor-general of Erzerum. The ecclesiastical administration of the dioceses has remained, however,

unaltered, as the Mufti of Van assumes still the title of Mollah of Koordistan.

In the impossibility, therefore, of establishing in a precise and accurate manner the boundaries of this land, the best way of coming to a solution of the problem is, I think, that of setting aside the present system of territorial partition, and of calling by the name of Koordistan that extent of country where the Koordish element is found to be predominant, and which the inhabitants themselves consider to be Koordistan. The limits of this vast territory can thus be carefully traced. To the north it extends from Mount Ararat, all along the Georgian frontier, up to 43° 20″ east longitude, that is to say, to the neighbourhood of Kars. Here the Koordish race comes into contact with the Georgian, as in many places the two elements find themselves mixed up. At Bayazid and Kars the inhabitants are of Georgian and Koordish blood, the Mussulman faith being the link of union which helps their amalgamation. Beyond the walls of the towns the Koords move and shift to and fro, crossing over to the Russian territory or returning into the Turkish dominions. These wandering tribes are the Haideranlis, the Djelalis, the Mamanlis, and those worshippers of the devil named the Yezids. Several Koordish tribes are also to be found wandering about in the neighbourhood of Erivan, in Georgia.

A line traced from Kars to Erzerum, from thence to

the Derssim Mountains, a branch of the Taurus, situated between Erzindjan and Kharput, then touching Diarbekir, and following the course of the Tigris, to join at last the range of mountains called the Gebel-Hoemerin, would circumscribe to the west the limits of Koordistan. In these parts the Koordish element comes into collision with the Turkish and Arabic races; while to the north-west and west of this line of demarcation the restless Koord comes face to face with the supine Turkish and Armenian peasants, and to the south-west the nomadic and wandering tribes of Koords and Arabs glance at each other from the opposite banks of the Tigris. This rather free way of fixing *ad libitum* the limits of Western Koordistan may be considered as strange by geographers; and it may not be quite to the taste of the Sultan and his viziers. It may even give rise to a formal protest from the population *en masse*, indignant at my attempt to make them all Koords in spite of their wishes. But neither the surmise of geographers, nor the disapproval of His Imperial Majesty, nor the indignation of the multitude, can make matters different from what they are, for a Koord is always a Koord, a Turk is a Turk, as a Chinaman will for ever be a Chinaman, and the country he inhabits will be China.

The fact that this north-western part of Koordistan is essentially a part of that country will be put beyond

doubt by the following arguments. First, the Koordish tribes are absolute masters of the whole extent of territory which lies east of Erzerum, from the outskirts of that town down to the frontier of Persia. Secondly, in Erzerum itself the mass of the Mussulman population is nothing else but a spurious element of Koords who pretend they have some claim to call themselves Turks. If a stranger were to ask one of the native Mussulmans of Erzerum whether he is a Koord by nationality, the individual would undoubtedly consider the question an insult, as he claims to belong to what he supposes to be a higher caste. If the ignorant native, however, were asked to substantiate his claim, he would be unable to do so, for the language which he speaks in his family is Koordish, as are his features, his manners, and his habits. That this Turcomania of the inhabitants of Erzerum is a real mania, having no excuse whatsoever on its behalf, is proved by the fact that the Mussulmans of Van labour under the same illusion, and indignantly disown their Koordish nationality. Let us suppose, however, that a shadow of right exists to legitimate the pretensions of the Mussulmans of Erzerum, on what grounds can those of Van, who fourteen years ago did not even know a single word of Turkish, possibly claim Turkish nationality? It is true that several hundred years ago Turkish conquerors and Janissaries settled in those

towns, but their descendants have been absorbed by the native Mussulman element to such an extent that no traces of them could be found now-a-days. As family names do not exist amongst the Turks, families and races are soon absorbed and disappear before the ascendancy of the predominant element. The glory of belonging to the domineering race, together with the hope of enjoying privileges and power, is a stimulant strong enough to change a Koord into a Turk. After all, the inhabitants of Erzerum and Van have no choice left, and finding themselves at the mercy of the stronger, endeavour to render the yoke lighter by means of flattery. The present state of things was imposed on them at the point of the bayonet.

To the south-west of Erzerum the Derssim mountains are a bulwark to the Koordish nationality. The wild mountaineers of that region have always been independent of the Turkish rule, and the many expeditions undertaken against them have been barren of result. The Koordish type of the population which lives sheltered in the recess of this stronghold is said to be remarkable for its elegance and beauty. Some officers who have made the campaign against these mountaineers told me that both women and men used to fight with the courage of despair. I myself saw their chiefs, who had come in a body to negotiate with the Commander-in-chief at Erzerum.

They were very handsome, and judging from their looks seemed also to be very cunning and wide-awake. When the Pasha presented them with some decorations, they appeared to understand so well the unmeaning nature of such a *farce* that they threw a slight glance of contempt at the ribbons and orders with which they were about to be adorned.

The limits of Koordistan to the south are delineated by the Gebel Hoemerin mountain range, which borders the plain of Bagdad and the lower basin of the Tigris. The Koordish province of Suleimanieh, and its dependency of Keui-Sandjak, are within a distance of only two days' march from Bagdad. Here, as well as all along the banks of the Tigris, the constant contact of the Koords with their Arab neighbours has had the effect of impressing on their character and manners something of the Arabic type. The mountain range which, running from north to south, separates the Turkish and Persian monarchies, has been reckoned as the eastern limit of Koordistan. This, however, is not correct, as many Koordish tribes are settled on the Persian territory just beyond the chain of mountains forming the frontier. A portion of Koordistan is thus under Persian authority, the Koordish element being scattered about in the frontier districts of Makou, Urmiah, Souk-Bulak, &c. The tribes which are of some note in this part

of Koordistan are the Shemsiklis, the Shikiahs, the Moghurs, the Bilbash, the Yezids, the Rozeks, &c.

To establish the precise number of the Koordish population which is roving about through the whole extent of territory just now described, is an utter impossibility. Even in those parts of Asia where the population is fixed and, so to say, attached to the soil, such a task presents many obstacles to statistical investigation. The only source from which information on this subject can be derived is the vague statements of the old men of the tribes, and the more than doubtful reports of some official who may have made a stay in the country. Basing my calculation on statements of this nature, I do not think I am much below the mark if I fix the number of the whole Koordish nation at 5,000,000.

After this general view of Koordistan and its limits, taken on a broad scale, let us now pass to the province of Van, Eastern Armenia, over which the narrative particularly extends. The province of Van consists not only of the territory properly known by that name, but also of its dependency the Sandjak of Hakkiari. This province constitutes what is officially styled the province of Koordistan. To the north its limits are the Sandjak of Bayazid, to the south the Hakkiari mountains, to the east the Persian province of Azirbeidjan, and to the west the Euphrates. Far from the principal centres of commerce, and out of

the reach of the caravans which transport the trade of Persia to the harbours of the Black Sea, this province, which is seldom visited by travellers and merchants, is left to slumber in lethargy and abandonment. Nature, however, has been liberal in its gifts to it, having endowed it with all the elements which can insure prosperity and abundance. Its climate is mild, the severe winters which visit Erzerum being unknown here. The thermometer seldom falls to 10° Centigrade below the freezing point (= 14° deg. Fahr.), whereas the utmost heat does not reach higher than from 30° to 35° Centigrade (or 86 to 95° Fahr.) in the sun.

Productions.—The soil is fertile and capable of producing anything; while a luxurious vegetation covers the whole country around the lake. The apple, the pear, the cherry, the apricot, the fig tree, and the vine, abundantly supply the country with their fruits, while the shade of the lime-tree, of the willow, of the poplar, of the elm, and of the mulberry protects it against the heat of summer. All the variety of vegetables which are to be found in the kitchen gardens of Constantinople are, with one or two exceptions only, supplied by the gardens of Van.

Wheat and barley are plentiful in the districts surrounding the lake, and the corn produced at Eldjivas is of the very best kind, its flour being remarkable for whiteness and the nutritive qualities it possesses.

The flocks of numberless sheep which are bred by the Koordish shepherds not only supply the country with meat, wool, butter, and cheese, but also provide the large markets of Asia Minor, Syria, and Constantinople with the means of subsistence. It is easy to conceive that in a country like this extravagance is not requisite in order to keep body and soul together or to enable one to indulge in gastronomic pleasures. In this promised land one oke (that is, 1250 grammes, = or nearly 3lbs. av.) of bread is sold at the rate of $1\frac{3}{4}d.$; the same quantity of meat is worth $3d.$

Minerals.—With regard to mineralogy, the resources of the province of Van are important. At four hours' distance from Van a mine of sulphur of the best quality has been found; and at a place called Aghazatchaï I myself discovered a mine of coal, and dug some of it up, the coal lying almost on the surface of the ground. In the district of Norduz several iron and coal mines are said to exist. A granite quarry is worked by the inhabitants, who extract from it a fine quality of stone, which is employed for the churches, mosques, and other public buildings in Van.

Industry.—The industry of the province is in its infancy, the articles manufactured being carpets of good designs and fanciful colours, but so long and narrow as to be unfit for furnishing apartments; woollen stockings and gloves, and linen of fair quality.

The most renowned production of Van is a kind of *moiré* stuff, known all through the East as *Van-abassi*—viz., Van-cloth. This article, which is remarkable for its neatness and showy appearance, is woven out of goats' hair, and answers as a first-rate waterproof. It is so highly thought of in Constantinople, that if anyone happens to be starting for Van every Pasha or grandee will hasten to order a certain quantity of this cloth. Silver cups, silver *narghilehs*, and other like objects, are very neatly executed by the silversmiths of the country. Iron and brass are also wrought to a certain extent.

Population.—The province of Van has a population amounting, at the lowest calculation, to 400,000 souls, and which is divided into four races—viz., Koords, Turks, Armenians, and Yezids.

Administration.—The administrative system of this province is on the same footing as that of the rest of the Turkish dominions. A pasha with the title of Mutessarif (administrator) is entrusted with the government. A council (Medjliss) composed of fourteen members, two of whom are Christians, assists the governor in the fulfilment of his functions. The Mohassebeji is entrusted with the management of the finances of the province, under the control, however, of the governor. The Mufti has the presidency over the court Mekiehmé, which has the Koran for its code of justice. The Armenians are under the authority of

their bishop, whose attributes, though spiritual, extend nevertheless to the civil administration of the community. This administrative system may, on account of its simplicity, be considered as fully efficient to diffuse the beneficial effects of a good government over the country. Matters, however, turn out differently; the Pasha, the Council, the Mohassebeji, and the Mufti all considering that the most important part of their duty is to try to become rich. Hence it results that instead of administrators the country finds on its back a swarm of birds of prey who tear away its bowels, leaving nothing behind but the dry bones.

A body of two hundred police is the only instrument which the administration possesses for the purpose of enforcing its authority. Whenever any coercive measure requires a greater display of active force, the governors of the province rely for such an emergency on the regular army, or, availing themselves of the quarrels of the tribes, adopt the policy of setting one side against the other. Consuls, vice-consuls, consular agents, &c.—in short the whole body of diplomatic agents—are entirely unknown to the inhabitants of Van. The greater part of them have scarcely had an opportunity of seeing the union-jack or the French tricolor. The Russian eagle has, however, shown them its claws from the other side of

the neighbouring frontier. The absence of foreign representatives leaves undisputed ground and free sway to native administration.

The revenue of the province varies from fourteen to seventeen thousand purses, the purse being of 500 Turkish piastres, that is about 4*l.* 10*s.* English money. Before the financial reforms introduced in Turkey by Fuad Pasha, the taxation consisted of the following items :—

Hashar, the tithe.

Vergui, individual contribution paid on the basis of an income-tax.

Kamshir, a tax of 60 paràs taken on every head of cattle.

The financial innovations had for their object to create a new income, which might produce a certain effect amongst the figures of a new budget. A tax on salt and one on tobacco were then introduced. These new taxes, however, instead of producing any substantial advantage to the treasury, proved, on the contrary, ruinous to the interests of the country. If the nomadic Koords, and in general the populations of this part of the empire, were in the same relative condition as the populations which are settled on the shores of the Black Sea or the Mediterranean, and enjoy the plenty derived from commerce and agriculture, in such a case the Koords, as well as all their

fellow-subjects, might have tolerated the new burden without any great effort. The tax on the consumption of salt is disastrous in its effects upon the interests of the population of Koordistan and Armenia, because it dries up the very source of their produce.

The principal wealth of Koordistan, as well as of the neighbouring Arab districts, is known to consist almost exclusively of their flocks and cattle. The property belonging to the Koordish and Arab tribes which inhabit the country situated between Mount Ararat and the Persian Gulf consists of not less than 40,000,000 of sheep; and as each sheep requires yearly for its subsistence a quantity of salt equal to three okes (eight pounds), the amount which is indispensable for the flocks and cattle cannot be under a hundred and twenty millions of okes. According to the new system of taxation the oke of salt is to be sold at the rate of 20 paràs, a price which will be acknowledged to be exorbitant when we consider that close to the frontier the Persian authorities sell the same amount at one parà. The new tax on salt increases, therefore, the weight of taxation to twenty times its former incidence.

However, the Koords all along the frontier do not seem for the present to care much for the trouble that the tax-gatherers and the custom-house agents may

take in order to enforce the new regulation. They are aware that though a law may be enacted there is a high range of mountains to overcome before it can be put into execution. Accordingly, day and night, they carry on a system of smuggling on a large scale under the very nose of the authorities. During my stay in Koordistan, the Koordish tribe of the Mugurs, which is settled in the neighbourhood of Van, smuggled over the frontier a whole caravan composed of seven hundred oxen laden with salt. As the frontier is large and wide, small caravans like these can go to and fro at leisure.

As far as the tax on tobacco is concerned, the inhabitants have managed to avoid it in two different ways. In those districts where it was impossible to keep the tax-gatherer away from the plantation, they adopted the simple process of discontinuing to plant tobacco. But where the mountains are steep enough for defence, the trusty rifles of the sharp-sighted mountaineer keep the officers of government at a respectful distance.

The population of Shemridan, a district close to the Persian frontier in the direction of Urmieh, when summoned to pay the new tax on the tobacco produced in their country, showed the length of their rifles to the tax-collector, and told him to pick up the money he required from the mouth of these formidable weapons.

The Sandjak* of Hakkiari is, as it has already been stated, a dependency of the Province of Van. Its limits are, to the north, the neighbourhood of Kotur and Mahmudieh ; to the west, the upper course of the Hoch-ab River and the district of Mukus. As to the south, I have not been able to ascertain its exact boundaries, but I can say with certainty that they extend as far south as the latitude of Urmieh, where are situated the districts of Guiever and Shemridan, both of them dependent upon the Sandjak of Hakkiari. To the east the Persian frontier forms the limit of this Sandjak.

Here, unlike the province of Van, beauty, mildness of climate, and fertility of soil are gifts which have been parsimoniously granted by nature. The winters in these high regions are severe and of long duration. The thermometer falls sometimes as low as 20° Cent. below zero, or 4° Fahr., and frost covers the streams and valleys for periods of two or three months' duration.

Produce.—On account of the ungratefulness of the soil the productions of this country are few, consisting only of wheat, tobacco, and flax. The willow and the poplar are to be found in the less mountainous districts, while a dwarfish kind of pine and a small specimen of oak cover some parts of the high

* The Sandjaks are subdivisions of a province.

regions. A thorny plant, known to the natives under the name of *ghieven*, is found here scattered all about the hills and ravines. This plant is one of the most useful articles in the domestic economy of the Koords, and is of general use all through northern Koordistan. The *ghieven* is a sort of thorn two feet high. Its stalk is thick, tortuous, fibrous in the body, and smooth on the surface. From this stalk numerous branches surmounted with bunches of thorns give to the plant the appearance peculiar to the cauliflower in its upper part. This plant is the only combustible which the Koords possess to serve for lighting their fires of dry dung. Its consumption thus gives rise to a peculiar commerce useful to the poorer classes. Honey and wax are pretty abundant in the different districts of this province. The good pasturage which is to be found in the high lands of Hakkiari is favourable for bringing up flocks of sheep and goats, as well as for the subsistence of cattle in general. Wealthy cattle-dealers from Erzerum and other parts repair every year to these mountains, where they find a large supply of animals for their trade. Vegetables and fruits are almost unknown in this country, as the inhabitants have always considered the trouble of cultivating gardens and kitchen-gardens superfluous.

Minerals.—The mineralogical resources of Hakkiari are far superior to its other productions. A mine of orpiment has been worked with success for

many years by Government agents. Two lead mines also exist, one of which was at one time worked, and several hundred thousand okes of the mineral were extracted and melted. Now the works have been abandoned, and the melted lead has been left exposed in the open field to tempt the cupidity of the inhabitants. This mine is in the proximity of Koshhanne, in the territory of the Nestorians. Mercury is said to exist in one spot, while iron, coal, and rock-alum have been found in several places. A copper mine also exists, but it has been abandoned of late years.

Industry.—The wild populations of Hakkiari are not, as may be easily conceived, an industrious lot. Their occupation consists in the manufacture of Koordish carpets, and of woollen socks and gloves. An article of manufacture which is peculiar to this country is a sort of medley blanket, made with a good deal of taste and fine workmanship. They are exactly like those wrappers which not long ago ladies of fashion used to draw over their knees when driving out.

Population.—The population of Hakkiari may be reckoned to be about 210,000 souls, out of which 60,000 are Nestorians, 2000 are Jews, and the remainder is formed of Koordish tribes and Yezids (worshippers of the devil).

Administration.—This province is governed by a Pasha *Caimakam* (lieutenant) of the Pasha of Van. The residence of this functionary is at Bash-kaleh, a

small borough which does not count more than sixty or seventy houses and a few shops. The Pasha of Hakkiari has also his own *Medjliss*, or council, composed of some chiefs, amongst whom are three Shekhs, who, being considered as saints by the population, enjoy a great influence. A *Mohassebeji* and a *Mufti* complete the suit of administrators.

Domestic Animals.—Of these northern Koordistan possesses very much about the same species which are to be found in the southern parts of Europe—the horse, the ass, the ox, the buffalo, the dog, the cat, the fowl, the goose, the turkey, and the duck. If with some of these animals any peculiarity is to be noticed, with others the use to which they are put differs from the work in which they are employed by European nations.

The Koordish horse is an animal of an excellent breed, and though it is evidently originally a cross between the Arab and Turcoman breeds, it now constitutes a separate race. This horse, which is fine and strongly built, in height is neither so tall as the Persian and Turcoman horses,* nor so small as the horses of Arabia or Cappadocia (Asia Minor). As for elegance of form, it cannot of course be compared with the Arab. The Koords consider the horse too noble an animal to be made use of for any

* See Xenophon, "The Retreat," book iv. chap. v.

other purpose but that of riding and action in the field. The Koordish breed is fast deteriorating, and a good specimen is seldom to be met with. The ass is not so common an animal in Koordistan, where it is employed as a beast of burden. Mules also are not very numerous. These animals come from the frontier districts of Persia, where they constitute an important and lucrative branch of trade. They are fine and strong, and fetch a good price.

The oxen in these countries are rather small in size, but their great strength and fine forms compensate for their small proportions. Instead of employing the ox in the tillage of the soil as is done in Europe, the Koords, who care little about agriculture, make use of it as a beast of burden. For this purpose a pair of large wallets is put on its back, and it can thus easily carry a weight of 150 pounds. The wallets are fastened with two woollen ropes, one of which passes under the belly of the animal, and the other from behind. As the tribe moves about in its wandering tours, the oxen carry the provisions, the utensils, and wealth of a Koordish household. It is on the back of these peaceable and forbearing quadrupeds that the Koord entrusts the dearest objects in his possession—his wives and his little ones. One of the prettiest and most interesting sights that a traveller can meet with in Koordistan is one of these caravans, when oxen are on the point of

crossing a ford with the women and children calmly seated on their backs, while the men and youths of the tribe keep themselves in the rear, earnestly watching and directing the advance of the caravan. The Armenians alone employ the ox in agricultural labour.

The buffalo is remarkably large in its proportions. The milk of this animal constitutes one of the principal articles of food of the Koord. Throughout Asia Minor and Koordistan the inhabitants generally prefer its milk to that of the sheep, as the cream and the cheese made from it are by far superior to those made from the milk of the cow or the sheep. Drawing carts is the exclusive privilege of the buffalo, and this is a matter of course, for these vehicles in this country are huge and clumsy machines, their model apparently dating from the antediluvian period. The buffalo, however, accomplishes his duty most admirably, and draws his cart without the least reluctance, and in the easiest way possible. In more refined countries man finds himself compelled to enforce his rule over the unlucky quadrupeds whom he keeps under subjection, by means of sticks, whips, and other such instruments of tyranny. Here in Koordistan such is not the case, and brutal means of coercion such as these are considered superfluous. Music is the medium which is employed for that purpose, and it really seems to be a first-rate substitute for the whip.

The driver has no sooner jumped on the carriage, and begun to utter his melodious song, than the buffaloes begin to move. If on the way the Koord wishes to command these philharmonic quadrupeds to halt, he has only to put an end to his melody and the buffaloes instantly stop. Music is thus employed to advantage in agricultural and industrial pursuits.

In Koordistan the cat is remarkable for its beauty, possessing a rich and fine fur, a splendid tail, and two pretty tufts of hair on the top of his ears. This kind of cat is known all through the East under the denomination of Van cats. In Europe these animals are the pets of ladies; but the denomination of Angora cats which is given to them is erroneous. On account of the great exportation which is carried on, these little animals have become scarce even in Van, where it is difficult now to find good specimens of this breed.

Wild Animals.—This country is also very well provided with wild animals. The mountains and narrow valleys are thickly peopled with wolves, foxes, wild goats (*Capra-ibex*), bears, and wild boars. Leopards are numerous, and their skin is considered by the Turks and the Persians as a fine and valuable fur. The grandees of Constantinople know these furs under the denomination of *vashak*. Partridges are to be found everywhere. The Koordish peasants and my soldiers were in the habit of providing my table every day

with this delicacy. Wild-ducks are frequently met with. Crows go by swarms, and are very destructive to agriculture.

My account of this country would not be complete if I omitted to mention here two wonderful animals which the Koords say exist somewhere in Hakkiari. Without making myself the least answerable for the truth of the statement, I leave to future travellers the task of ascertaining whether such creatures really exist or not. According to the general belief of the Koords—a people very fond of the marvellous and portentous—there exists somewhere near Bash-kaleh a white, perfectly white, buffalo—a single specimen of its species. This is one of the wonders. The other great rarity is a bird, which some say is a vulture, others an eagle, as white as snow. The circumstance that both these wonders are white is curious enough, and would naturally induce us to attach little faith to the statements of the ignorant Koords. However, their assertions attain a certain degree of consistency when one takes into consideration the fact that the story of the white bird was found to be known at Erzerum, where Dr. Rossi, physician to the Quarantine, mentioned it to me afterwards. The doctor said it was universally known that a white and rare bird existed in the mountains of Hakkiari. One of the French consuls, resident at Erzerum, had even com-

missioned some individuals to catch it with the intention of presenting it to the Emperor Napoleon. The efforts of the consul had, however, been frustrated, as the men who had been sent to Hakkiari did not succeed in seizing their prey. From this statement it is to be inferred that the story of the white bird is not entirely groundless, and that, if researches were successfully carried on, a service might be rendered to natural science.

Before concluding the present chapter, something must be said with respect to a point which is for geographers of the highest importance. It is well known that the Tigris has its source in the Hakkiari mountains, but the exact spot from which that mighty river springs is one of the questions not decided by modern geography. Schultz, in 1830, undertook a voyage to Koordistan and the Hakkiari mountains, for the purpose of finding the source of the Tigris. That daring and enterprising traveller succeeded in getting access into the wildest, and as yet unexplored, parts of the country. The difficulties and dangers he had to meet with can hardly be conceived. It is enough to say that, though alone without guide or escort, the German traveller did not hesitate to trust his life to the hands of a lot of blood-thirsty bandits and treacherous savages. The suspicious Koords, as well as the authorities of Van, mistook this apostle of science for a spy of the infidels. This was enough to doom

him to slaughter. Khan Mahmud, one of the greatest Koordish chiefs of that epoch, had received Schultz in his territory, and had feigned to grant him his hospitality. The death of the unfortunate man having been decided upon, the Khan invited his victim to a hunting party which was to take place in the neighbourhood of Mahmudieh. Once there his men drove their guest to an out-of-the-way place, and there butchered him according to the Koordish fashion, scattering the fragments of his body all about the ravines and mountains. Thus Schultz fell a victim to his love for geographical discoveries; and while the sources of the Nile, and other distant parts of the terrestrial surface, are visited by different travellers of renown, the cradle of the historical Tigris remains as yet a problem.

The inquiries which I made of the inhabitants sanction the belief that the true source of the Tigris lies somewhere to the north of the plain of Elbagh. It can easily be conceived what a cause of regret it is for me to have had the opportunity of remaining for months and months together within a few hours of the sources of that river without being able to start on an exploring expedition. My duties were unfortunately in the way, and though incited by the love of adventure, and the thirst of seeing the unknown, I was compelled to circumscribe my tours and ramblings within comparatively narrow limits.

It is to be hoped that the enterprising spirit which animates the geographers of the present day will supply science before long with more accurate and complete information concerning the sources of the Tigris, as well as all those points which are of paramount interest to the geographical and ethnological inquirer.

CHAPTER VIII.

The City of Van—The Fortress—The Suburbs—The Gardens—Its Population—Ressul Pacha—The Fishery—Dervish Bey—Sheran Bey—Yedi-kilissieh—The School—The Newspaper.

ON arriving at Van I was invited by the *imam* (chaplain) of my battalion, a certain Ali Effendi, to alight at his residence. The *imam* had taken up his quarters in the midst of the gardens of Van, abandoning his spiritual flock to its fate. The battalion was then in garrison at Kotur, close to the frontier. Ali Effendi could not see the fun of stopping in a dull place, while it was possible for him to enjoy the comforts of a town. His choice was undoubtedly for the best. The honour of receiving his superior officer as a guest was considered by the shrewd *imam* as not a trifling affair. He hastened, therefore, to put himself and his house at my disposal during my stay at Van. My sojourn here was not prolonged beyond a fortnight, during which I had to present myself to the Commander of the Division and to the Governor of the Province. I had also to put myself in contact with all those officials who were connected with the service and the commissariat department. In the midst of

these occupations I found the necessary time and leisure to visit all that was worth seeing in the city as well as in its environs.

As has been stated in one of the preceding chapters, the city of Van is situated at the foot of a rock which is surmounted by the towers and walls of its fortress. This city, according to the Armenian historians, was built by the famous Semiramis, and is on that account called by them Semiram-gherd.* In the time of Alexander the Great, Van assumed its present name, which was then given to it by King Van, who rebuilt the town anew. The dynasties of the Seljukis, of the Turcomans, and latterly Timur-lenk the Conqueror, all of them successfully subdued this city with their invading armies. In 1533, the Turks took possession of Van, but Shah Tamas soon presented himself with his army in order to snatch the prey from the hands of the victors. Shah Tamas besieged the fortress without result, as he was not able to render himself master of it. A spot in the suburbs to the east of the city is still a living souvenir of the siege laid to it by the Persians. That place is called Shah-bagh, the garden of the Shah, as it is said that the tent of Shah Tamas was pitched in that very spot.

* The termination *gherd* or *ghird* is very common in Armenia and Koordistan. Such are the names of the two towns of Melez-ghird and Hellez-ghird.

The three hundred and sixty-six years of Turkish domination which have elapsed have not contributed to restore the city of Van to its former fame and prosperity. If the Van of the present day is famous throughout the East, that is because the attractions to which it owes its renown consist of those charms and of that fertility which nature has bestowed upon it, and which it is beyond the power of any tyrant to efface and destroy. As for those improvements and embellishments which attest the existence of a refined and superior race, modern Van has nothing to boast of. To the eyes of Orientals, however, such things are not worthy of a thought. Incapable themselves of improving that which they have been able to grasp, or of restoring that which they have destroyed, they calmly cross their legs and arms while gazing on the beauties of Nature. Thus the ruined, the dilapidated Van of our days is considered by Eastern people as an earthly paradise, because a clear stream, a green meadow, a fine garden are things which satisfy the desires of the Oriental mind. One must not be astonished in hearing Turks, Persians, Egyptians, and all other Orientals praise to the sky, in their bombastic phraseology, the name of some peculiar spot or town. It is the beauties of nature, however, which they praise, not those of art. Van is thus proverbial throughout the East as a pleasant sojourn,

on account of the charms of its environs. The saying common amongst the inhabitants of Koordistan, when exalting the wonders of this city, is shaped into the following rhyme in the Turkish idiom—

" Duniada Van,
Hareteh iman,"

which, literally translated, means, " In this world Van, in the other salvation." The true believer, who attaches great value to the salvation of his soul, begs from Allah that in the other world he may be admitted into the company of the Huris, and that a lodging may be granted to him in one of the kioshks built in heaven. In this life, however, his pretensions are more modest. He asks from his Creator nothing but the blessing of passing his career in one of the gardens of Van.

The town of Van is surrounded by fortifications, presenting a parallelogram which covers an area of about 240,000 metres square. Three gates and three wooden bridges placed over the ditch give access into the town. The gate facing the east is called the gate of Tebriz; the one opposite to the west is the Stambul gate; and that opening towards the south is called the Orta-kapu, or middle gate. To the north the rock hangs perpendicularly over the town, and shelters it on that side. A principal artery crosses the city from east to west, while a number

of small, crooked, and dirty lanes run parallel to the main road and others perpendicular to it. The whole extent of ground comprised within the walls is not inhabited. That part of the town which lies to the west is almost entirely deserted, and remains covered with heaps of ruins, while the population is gathered to the east, and towards the southern entrance. The houses are constructed of pise, and have generally two stories. As they are deprived of the advantage of opening their windows on to the street, they give a gloomy, dark appearance to the thoroughfares and to the whole of the town.

There is scarcely any building worth noticing either for its antiquity or its importance, except a ruined mosque of imposing structure which belongs to the epoch of the Turcomans. The mosque of the same era which is at Erzerum is remarkable for its fine minarets, and represents a similar style of architecture. The mosques of the Turkish period are very poor specimens of the sacred architecture of Islam. They are three in number, one of them being the *Selatin-djami* or Basilica, in which Sultan Murad the Fourth assisted at the Friday prayer when going with his army to the conquest of Tebriz and the northern provinces of Persia. The Armenian patriarchat and the Church are also buildings of no importance.

Van possesses three old khans with their usual court-yards and galleries, and a new khan con-

structed by the Armenian merchants, more in the style of the passages and arcades in Europe than in that of the ancient khans. This khan is, however, very neat, and if faith is to be attached to the gossip of Turkish officials, was constructed by the Armenians a little before the Crimean war with the object of providing for the expected Russian liberators comfortable and suitable lodgings.

The city is not the place of residence selected by the inhabitants of Van, to whom it holds the same position as the City does to Londoners. A very small proportion of the population resides in it. The inhabitants come here on market days, and when they have any business to transact in the khans or at the bazaar. As to the modes of locomotion from the suburbs to the city, Van has none of those advantages possessed by the commercial metropolis of the world. A metropolitan railway has not as yet been established, and 'busses are unknown to the primitive inhabitants. Those amongst them who are rich make their entry into the city on the back of their horses or donkeys, and those who cannot afford such a luxury indulge in the healthy exercise of walking. It must be added that the city of Van cannot boast of its baths, as the only two that are to be found in it are badly constructed and not very clean.

As a military position the fortress of Van is of the

highest importance. From the Persian frontier to the Euphrates the whole extent of the Turkish dominions is under the action of that fortress. Kars to the north and Van to the east are the two bulwarks of the Ottoman empire in Asia. The fortress of Van possesses the double advantage of being a strategic point of the first class in its zone, while topographically it constitutes one of the strongest positions that it is possible to meet with anywhere. I remember when talking one day with Fezi Pasha (General Colman), an Engineer officer of the highest merit who had been at Kars during the siege, that officer raised his eyes to the fortress and exclaimed, "Oh! if the fortress of Van had been at Kars, the siege might have lasted many years." The strength of this position may be understood by the following account, which however cannot but give an imperfect idea of its real strength. All around the fortress the ground is perfectly level up to a distance of about three thousand yards. The little hills which at that distance begin to rise from the northern extremity of the plain offer no facilities whatever to the approaches of an enemy, as they are domineered by the batteries situated on the summit of the rock. Six towers, united by a courtine, are the works which crown the rock. Being constructed of pise, and on the mediæval system of fortification, these works now-a-days would of course be of no use, but modern improvements could put the fortress on a respectable

footing of defence. The deficiencies of the system of defence on this side are, the want of advanced works, which would afford the advantage of flanking fires, and that of not having a lower line of batteries, which would allow the defenders to use razing fires. The batteries on the heights cannot answer for that purpose, as their elevation from the plain is 250 feet. The northern side is evidently the weak point, the one which is now the most open to an attack.

The ridge on the summit of the rock falls abruptly, presenting a steep talus at its eastern and western extremities. The walls of the fortress follow this precipitous descent and join the lower part of the fortifications, which surround the town. These fortifications consist of two bastions, three courtines, two lateral ones, and a front one, which faces the south. On this side the approaches are thoroughly protected by the lower line and its bastions, as well as by the batteries situated on the heights. It must be said, however, that the works on this side are likewise in the most wretched state. Since the conquest, the hand of an engineer has not touched them, and the only repair they have undergone is a thorough whitewashing, which was applied to them at the time of the Crimean war. What adds enormously to the strength of the fortress of Van, is the circumstance that its communications with the lake, and therefore with the countries surrounding it, cannot be cut off by the enemy.

Van cannot boast of many relics of ancient times, the only one to be found being the colossal inscription in cuneiform characters, which is engraved on the rock facing the south and the town. Having no knowledge of the cuneiform characters, I will not make any conjecture with respect to the possible meaning of the inscription. The reader who may wish to know something about it must address himself to a more competent authority. On the summit there are three rooms excavated in the rock. These rooms are large in size and exhibit admirable workmanship. The commissariat department has turned them into depôts in which is now kept a quantity of material belonging to the troops. Another curiosity worth noticing is a well of naphtha, which supplies the garrison and the population with a stuff generally used for greasing the wheels of carts and for combustion in lamps.

The suburbs of Van constitute properly speaking the town, the inhabitants preferring naturally to enjoy the open air and the agreeable sojourn of their gardens rather than be compressed within the ramparts of a fortress. In the vicinity of the fortress scarcely any building exists, and all round the *glacis* a large and open space extends to a distance of six or seven hundred yards. The principal suburbs lie to the east of the town, reaching to the foot of the igneous rocks called the Varak mountains, which limit

the plain of Van in that direction. A magnificent avenue three miles in length, shaded by two, and in some places by four, rows of fine large willows and poplars, runs from the glacis of the fortress through the suburbs as far as the foot of the hills. Two clear streams run rapidly by the sides of the avenue, bathing the roots of the trees and enlivening the landscape by their restless motion.

Following this avenue the Mussulman suburb is the first met with. The houses are of an elegant and light appearance, and are surrounded by gardens and plantations. Further on, at a distance of two miles from the fortress, begins the Armenian suburb, in which the houses are remarkable for their peculiar neatness and good order. In Van the buildings are made of pise; a material which, though far from being the best, is surely a hundred times better than that of the wooden match-boxes of Constantinople, which its inhabitants dignify with the name of houses. The houses made of pise are very solid, some of them lasting 120 years; and as the interior is generally covered with plaster, in appearance these buildings are the same as if they were constructed of stone or bricks. It is very seldom that the houses are plastered externally, and they are consequently seen to disadvantage: but on the other hand a luxury of the kind would weigh rather heavily on the budgets of their proprietors, as lime is an expensive article in this country. Amongst

the peculiarities of the place one is that the houses, as is generally the case in the East, have flat roofs, and another that newspapers and other scraps of paper are eagerly sought for, to be employed by the householders as a substitute for panes of glass. The wealthiest classes manage to introduce some pure light into their rooms by sticking a small pane of glass in the midst of the panes of paper.

The gardens are the principal pride of Van, and constitute the wealth of its inhabitants. They abound in fruit-trees of all sorts, whose shaded recess offers a charming retreat during the heat of summer. The poor, as well as the middle class, draw their means of subsistence from their gardens and plantations, as vegetables and fruits are the things which they generally eat. What they cannot consume during the summer season, they carefully lay by and preserve for the winter. The fruits thus kept are the pear, the apple, the quince, the apricot, the tomato, and beet-root. Beet-root is very abundant all through the country, and grows admirably. The Armenians make great use of it during Lent, taking care to pickle it for that purpose. Willow trees are very numerous, and are to be seen in every garden. This predilection for the willow is to be accounted for by the fact that it furnishes its owner with a pretty good source of emolument. The branches of the tree are cut at intervals of several years, when

they have attained the required size. By planting their trees at different periods, the natives manage to have every year a supply of these branches, which are employed in the construction of ceilings, and fetch, therefore, a good price.

Abundance of water being the first condition for the maintenance of gardens, the flourishing state of those of Van would lead one to believe that the population must be abundantly supplied with that element. However, such is not the case, the want of water being the constant complaint of the people. The water which serves for irrigation comes from a tank situated on the heights of Mount Varak, but it so happens that, as the administration has never thought of repairing the locks, a great portion of it is wasted before reaching its destination. Two thousand pounds would be more than sufficient to repair the tank, but as the Turkish Government thinks above all only of drawing as much money out of the country as it possibly can, the consequence is that no one has ever tried to satisfy the wants of the people. As for that portion of the water which finds its way to the gardens, the demand being greater than the supply, the wealthiest proprietors sequestrate it for their own benefit, while the weak and the poor must be thankful if ever they obtain any, and from this cause the area of garden cultivation is much restricted.

The population of Van amounts to fourteen thousand

souls, subdivided into eight thousand Armenians and six thousand Mussulmans of Koordish and Turkish blood. Here, as everywhere else throughout the Ottoman empire, the Armenians, as a Christian race, have the entire monopoly of trade, and of the little industry which exists in the country. Thus through its energy this race has succeeded in surpassing the Mussulman population in culture, wealth, and position. Education is amongst them in a satisfactory state, thanks to the efforts of their clergy, while travelling and traffic contribute enormously to the increase of their knowledge and wealth. The Mussulman population spend their time in the tillage of their gardens, or in the care of their properties, while many amongst them who aspire to the blessing of sitting down before a well-provided table, become members and servants of the administration. It is only since 1864 that a preparatory school has been established at Van, to promote the education of Mussulmans; up to that time nothing had been done.

During my sojourn at Van I was brought into contact with many persons whose manners, habits, and ideas exhibited various illustrations of the genuine native element. One of the most remarkable was the then governor of Van, Resul Pasha, a well-known character. His history has already been related by Fraser in his "Koordistan and Mesopotamia." However, as I have heard his story with a greater variety

of details from the mouth of Resul Pasha himself, I think that it will be instructive to narrate it, as it will show the vicissitudes which may befall a man exposed to the tide of Oriental events.

From his appearance Resul Pasha was a man not much above fifty, his dark painted beard and hair, his finely-drawn eyebrows and eyelashes, at first sight proclaiming him to be in the prime of manhood. A nearer inspection and examination of his toilette, however, is all that is requisite to put it beyond doubt that his Excellency the Governor is not quite a chicken, but an old man close on seventy. The coquettish attire and the youthful appearance of the old Pasha are, after all, mere trifles; and if men in the bosom of European society have learned how to conceal the ravages of time by the appliances of art, we must not be surprised if the descendants of the Medes and the Persians should cultivate those fine arts which were cultivated by their ancestors.* Notwithstanding his exterior foppish decoration, something martial, something noble, could easily be detected in the manners and bearing of Resul, unmistakeable signs of his high birth and position.

In the many and long interviews which I had with the gallant Pasha, the poor man related to me, with a broken heart, but with a soul still fierce, the fall of

* See the description of the Medes by Xenophon.

his family and the misfortunes of his life. Resul Pasha is a Koordish prince, whose family used once to reign over the province of Revanduz. His eldest brother was the famous Mehemet Pasha, who, towards the year 1834, was the most remarkable man in Koordistan. With an aspiring genius he had conceived the *grande idée* of emancipating his country from the authority of the sultans, and of consolidating the power of his family. Uniting the qualities of a conqueror and of a legislator, Mehemet Pasha succeeded in extending his sway over the neighbouring provinces of Kerkuk and Mussul, and in gathering under his flag a large number of Koordish troops. The valiant Resul was his general-in-chief, and, as such, had the command in all the wars and expeditions which were undertaken with a view of increasing and consolidating the power of Mehemet Pasha. As the latter had no heirs, Resul Pasha had been designed for his successor and heir to the supreme power.

The Porte naturally could not remain indifferent to the increasing power and popularity of the Pasha of Revanduz. It decided therefore to put a stop to his encroaching policy, and to subject him to its authority. An army was sent to Mussul under the command of Reshid Pasha, the Seraskier, to whom this difficult undertaking was entrusted on account of his being an intimate friend of the Pasha of Revanduz. The Ottoman Government was anxious to settle this

difficulty without coming to an open conflict. The policy which it therefore adopted was treacherous, as it was under the mask of friendship that the campaign was to be fought, not with the sword. Mehemet Pasha fell into the snare, and, having gone to the Turkish camp for the purpose of negotiating, was hastily packed off to Constantinople, and put into the clutches of his friend Sultan Mahmud.

The Sultan received Mehemet Pasha with the greatest distinction, and bestowed on him numerous tokens of his imperial favour. The Koordish Pasha was acknowledged to be a man endowed with the greatest qualities, and one of the pillars that sustained the throne of the Sultan. The Porte decided to reorganize the whole of Koordistan, and name Mehemet Pasha governor-general of that province, giving him the most unlimited power. A vessel belonging to the imperial fleet was put at the disposal of the Pasha, who was to depart for his native country and assume the supreme power in compliance with the arrangement which had been made between him and the Sublime Porte. It is now thirty-five years since the poor Pasha left the Golden Horn and entered the Black Sea, but he never reached the place of his destination, having neither been seen nor heard of ever since. His assumption to the sky, or his descent to the depths of the ocean, are the only miracles which can explain the disappearance

of Mehemet Pasha and of the five persons belonging to his suite. As for his treasures, they also seem to have evaporated at the same time, falling as an exuberant rain within the enclosure of the imperial treasury.

The fall of Mehemet Pasha was closely followed by the surrender of Resul Pasha and his army. Resul was exiled from his native country, his property was confiscated, and he saw himself compelled to subsist on an allowance given to him by the treasury. During the late Crimean war his chivalrous temper prompted him to take the command of a body of Koordish cavalry, which he equipped at his own expense. The Turkish Government thought proper to remunerate the services of the old Pasha by appointing him first governor of Kars, and afterwards by removing him to the government of Van.

The appointment of Resul Pasha as governor of Van was a measure dictated by policy, the Turkish Government being under the impression that the national feeling of the Koords would be flattered in seeing the administration of their country entrusted to the hands of one of their countrymen. The choice, however, did not turn out to be a good one, old Resul having shown himself unfit to govern a country according to the present complicated and refined system of Turkish administration. In the imbroglio

of civil affairs the old Pasha lost his brain. To do him justice, however, it must be said that there are not many honest men who could get on when invested with official capacities in Turkey. Resul Pasha as a governor was a fish out of water,—he was out of that element in the midst of which he had been accustomed to breathe—the smoke and the dust of the field of battle. Whenever he had an opportunity of talking with me of the exploits of his younger days, the old Pasha's face used to be metamorphosed as if inflamed by the emotions of youth. His eyes were sparkling and bright, his nostrils inflated like those of an excited and eager charger. "Times are changed, my Bey," Resul used to say, "I know that I am good for nothing; where are those days when, with lance in rest, I could crush a lot of ruffians under the hoofs of my horse? Now it is for them to rule the world." Resul Pasha has had, of course, several wives during his earthly career, and a numerous offspring. His eldest son, a young man thirty years of age, was named Fetah Bey. He was a very accomplished person, being a first-rate scholar in the Arabic, Persian, and Turkish literature. We soon became bosom friends, taking almost regularly our meals and walks together. I always found him the most sincere and devoted friend.

The epoch of my sojourn at Van happened to be the latter end of May and the beginning of June, a

season in which the fishery on the lake gives plenty of work to the population, and offers an opportunity for the picnics of the grandees. Resul Pasha, as governor of the province, was obliged to inaugurate with his presence the opening of the fishing season. This event constitutes a national festival which not only attracts the official body, but also a vast number of the inhabitants. Having received an invitation to that effect, I hastened early in the morning to the place of *rendezvous*, which was at the Pasha's residence. Thence a little before daybreak the whole of the party, consisting of civil and military *employés*, members of the council, mounted police, etc., started, following the Stambul road, which runs parallel to the northern shore of the lake. The spot where the fishing takes place is at the mouth of the river Bendimah, the largest of the tributaries of Lake Van. It will be remembered that in one of the previous chapters it was said that the fishing season lasts in this country only one month, the belief of the inhabitants being that during the other eleven months there is not a single fish in the whole extent of the lake. When, however, the fish rush to the sweet water for the purpose of depositing their eggs, the people of Van open their mouths with wonder, believing in the instantaneous procreation of millions and millions of fish.

The distance from Van to the bridge on the Bendi-

mah is of about five hours' journey. On our reaching the bridge the party followed the left bank of the river, and directed itself straight to the mouth. The river in that part is a considerable sheet of water, having something like two hundred yards width. On both banks, as well as on the river itself, the scene was of the most animated and extraordinary nature. A thick crowd of several thousand persons were shouting and contending, while, in the middle of the river, a multitude of fish, springing from the water up to a height of ten or twelve feet, were struggling in a state of panic and alarm. The flashing produced by the rays of the sun reflected by the agitated surface of the river, and the variety of silver tints which were glittering on the glossy scales of the doomed fish, presented a lively and rare effect.

Once on the spot, the police opened a passage for the Pasha and his company, reserving for the party a very convenient place close to one of the dikes which serve to catch the fish. The system by which the fishery is carried on is ingenious, though simple. Four dikes made of wicker are constructed in the river and placed perpendicularly to the current. The first dike, beginning from the mouth, has three loop-holes, through which the fish are allowed to enter, the second has two loop-holes, while the three others have only one each. The fish, on entering through the first dike, pass quietly on without being molested; but once

in front of the second, they find themselves violently caught by a lot of nets and hooks, &c. The struggle then becomes exceedingly animated. The fish rush back towards the lake, but finding the loop-holes shut, push to the second dike, where those who succeed in getting through pass to the third and fourth, while such as cannot get out run in all directions, splashing and jumping above the water till they find themselves at the bottom of a basket. The animation of the crowd was great, the bustling and shouting increasing and abating according to the excitement of the moment. The fishermen were busy at work with the nets and hooks in their hands; lots of people were filling large baskets with fish; while others were intent in arranging their cargoes and packing them on the backs of their horses and donkeys.

A kind of *déjeuner aux doigts* was offered to our party by the Armenian who had farmed the fishery that year. This *déjeuner* consisted entirely of fish prepared in two or three different ways, a circumstance which brought back to my memory the whitebait dinners so much relished in bygone days, when a party to Greenwich was a regular treat of the London season. Some small bottles of *raki* soon made their appearance. These of course were drunk on the sly, as the old Pasha would not have put up with such a scandal. A ballet of dancing boys established itself

in front of the place which we occupied, and began its performances, assisted by a wretched orchestral accompaniment, consisting of a broken old screeching fiddle and one or two noisy clarionets. The shabby petticoats worn by the dancers, and the impudent contortions and demeanour which they exhibited, appeared to many of the spectators wonders in the art of dancing.

This picnic party afforded me an opportunity of seeing a portion of the population massed on one spot, of observing its appearance and character, and of judging of its general well-being. Of course this remark refers only to the male population, as, except the harems of the Pasha and of one or two *employés*, the female element had no representative on the spot. As for what I could there see of the population of Van, they appeared neatly dressed, well behaved, rather clumsy in appearance, and not endowed with a very vivid intelligence. Amongst the grandees of the place I happened that day to pick out several acquaintances, Dervish Bey, the most influential member in the council of the province, being one of them. I came likewise in contact with a person of the name of Sheran Bey, also a member of the council, and the most notorious and wealthy amongst the Armenians. A slight sketch of these two men will not be found here *mal à propos*, as it is by the study of such characters that it is possible to form an accurate judgment on the real condition of the country and people.

Dervish Bey was the son of one of the native Pashas of Van, who at one time had renounced his allegiance to the Porte. His family is known by the surname of *Demir-oghlu* (son of iron), and has always been at the head of a faction whose object is that of maintaining its ascendancy over the population of the province. As is always the case, one faction implies the existence of another, its rival, which wages war against the former. Van also has, therefore, its two hostile parties, and the Demir-oghlu faction has a rival in that of Djamus-oghlu (son of a buffalo). Twenty years ago the contest between these two parties used to result in battles like those which took place in mediæval Rome between the Colonna, the Orsini, and the Frangipani families. Now the Demir-oghlus and the Djamus-oghlus have selected the chamber of the council for their battle-field, and plots and intrigues for weapons. Dervish Bey began his career by fighting against the Sultan. He was then about twenty years of age, a first-rate horseman and a daring character. While the Turks were advancing to take possession of the fortress of Van, Dervish Bey resolved to defend it, and sent word to the Koordish tribes, and to the Persians, to come, as he was determined to give over the place to them instead of delivering it to the Sultan's troops. This scheme, however, did not succeed, and finding himself compelled to surrender, Dervish Bey cut his way

through the besieging Turks, and took to the mountains, where he began a guerilla warfare.

After some years of an adventurous life, Dervish Bey was compelled to surrender, and was sent into exile, where he remained during a certain period. In the repose of confinement, meditating over his position and future prospects, he saw that it was absurd to think of making opposition and waging war against the Sultan with the scanty means at his disposal. He concluded therefore that the best way of acquiring power was that of serving the rulers in order to oppress the people, by which means he could share the profits with them. Accordingly, on coming back to his native country, he introduced himself into the council, where, after having become the leading member, he put the whole of Van at the feet of the greedy governors, on condition of course of sharing the booty half and half. Through cunning and craft he thus succeeded in getting as much power over the country as his ancestors ever had. His fortune increasing, he became proprietor of large estates, built for himself a fine palace, and freely indulged his lust for profligacy and debauchery.

Sheran Bey, the Armenian grandee of the place, was quite the reverse of the medal. While his Mussulman colleague was the prototype of the adventurous, restless, unprincipled, and profligate spirit, Sheran was the model of the man who owes

standing and fortune to his labours, to his learning, and to the superiority of his mind. His career had begun by the acquisition of a sound education, which gave him an ascendancy over his countrymen. Having earned a considerable fortune through industry and labour, Sheran became the most influential man amongst his co-religionists, and won the esteem even of the Mussulmans, who were compelled to acknowledge the ascendancy of his intellect. A seat in the administrative council of the province could not of course be refused to the Armenian Bey, as the new political system inaugurated throughout the Ottoman empire gave him such a distinction as a right. The poor have always looked on Sheran as their protector and friend. The parallel between these two men, Dervish Bey and Sheran Bey, presents one of those living proofs which establish beyond doubt the relative value of the two antagonistic systems of Christianity and Mohammedanism; one showing the triumph of brutal force, with vice and corruption as its consequence; the other proving that labour and industry are associated with virtue.

My sojourn in Van had now been prolonged over a fortnight, and the time for leaving for Kotur, my garrison town, was approaching. An unexpected trip to the Monastery of Yedi-Kilissieh was, however, the cause of postponing my voyage for a few days. It has grown into a habit with the Turks, particularly

with those who constitute the class of officials, to expatiate with pedantic emphasis on the innumerable minerals which, according to their belief, are to be found in every province, nay, in every village of the Ottoman territory. It happened one day that while chatting with Resul Pasha on the subject of the metallurgic wealth of the country, after having enumerated many minerals which he asserted were lying on the even surface of the ground, the old man added, "Why, my good sir, you have only to go to those mountains you see (the Varak mountains), and there you will find as much coal as may be required by all the fleets of the world." Of course a statement made with so much assurance drew, as was natural, from my mouth the question, "Have you seen the coals with your own eyes?" To this the Pasha answered that every one in the country knew the fact, and that, if I wished to ascertain the point beyond doubt, he would give me an escort and send me to the spot, where, like Thomas, I should be able to see with my eyes and touch with my fingers.

The proposal was accepted, and the following morning I was early on horseback, accompanied by a native guide and provided with a letter of introduction from the Bishop of Van, Monseigneur Ignadios, to the Abbot of Yedi-kilissieh, where I thought of sleeping at night. Taking, therefore, a south-easterly direction, the small party, composed of myself and

three attendants, emerged from the midst of the vineyards and orchards of the suburbs, and followed a path which gradually rises to the level of some green fields. After an hour's ride the road passes through several narrow defiles, overhung by enormous masses of igneous rocks, fragments of which had rolled down, entirely covering the ground. My guide, who was reputed to be a *connoisseur* on mineralogical subjects, hastened to show me the fragments of igneous rocks which were lying on the surface, and told me that these stones ought to be fossil coal, as otherwise they could not be so black.

Being myself as much of a mineralogist as my guide, or even the Pasha himself, I confess I found it rather puzzling to give my decision on such a subject. As a European I was deemed infallible, and my reputation of being a man who knew everything was now evidently in danger; but happily much knowledge was not required in order to see that there was a great difference between coal and these stones. The only thing which could lead the inhabitants to make such a mistake was the blackish appearance of the latter. On closer examination, however, it was easily seen that the colour of the stone was not of that deep black characteristic of fossil coal, but a black mixed with some reddish and very dark green tints. Besides, the stone was too hard, and entirely without that brittleness which is one of the pecu-

liarities of coal. I therefore discarded the spurious article, and, assuming a learned air, asked the guide if this was all he had to show me, and whether he had no better specimens to present. Having given a negative answer, he added that it would be as well if I were to ask some information from the monks of the convent, who were well informed on all such matters.

Without giving myself any more trouble about the matter, I hastened to the monastery, where I was sure to find something worth seeing, to compensate me for the unsuccess which had attended my mineralogical researches. It took us about an hour to climb up the hill, on the top of which the convent of Yedi-kilissieh is situated. The whole of this hill, as well as the little valleys surrounding it, were covered with gardens and fields in the highest state of culture. On alighting from horseback I was received at the door of the monastery by two of the monks and several peasants, who did not hesitate to perform the usual ceremonial of Oriental selams. Getting through the big arch-gate which gives entrance to the court-yard of the cloister, I asked to be shown into the room of the Abbot Mighirditch Kara-bash. The monks informed me that the Abbot was not there, having gone several days ago to the monastery of Tchengheli-kilissieh in the neighbourhood of Bitlis, where there is one of the most renowned shrines of Armenia. I then presented the letter of which I

was the bearer, and having expressed my intention of spending the night as their guest, a room was soon put at my disposal by those good-hearted men, who willingly sat with me in order to keep me company.

On requesting to be allowed to see the church and monastery, the monks rose and conducted me to the church, which I was especially desirous to see. The reason for this curiosity will be plain when I mention that the Turkish name, Yedi-kilissieh, given to this ecclesiastical structure means *the seven churches.* I could not really understand how seven churches could possibly be put together like a bunch of Chinese boxes, the whole collection forming but one church. This was the point which I wished particularly to ascertain. On entering, I found the first church was a kind of vestibule of a new construction, in which there was a kind of shrine made of marble, having a gilt railing all round. This was the work of some rich Armenian who had bequeathed large funds for the purpose. The second church is composed of a kind of arcade, with a series of pillars bearing the images of the Apostles. This building, according to the saying of one of the monks, is a thousand years old. The third church is a continuation of the second, but, being smaller than the two preceding ones, bears in relation to them the appearance of a sanctuary or inner temple. This latter building has

all the marks of the remotest antiquity. On the floor of the inner temple, on the right hand side, there is a tomb with two human figures lying side by side. These, according to the Armenian inscription, which one of the monks explained to me, are the figures of Sennacherib, King of Armenia, and of his wife. I could not learn what was the date of their death, but as far as I was able to understand my ciceronis, that king was the founder of the church and the monastery. The number of churches I actually saw was three. The other four necessary to make up the number of seven I could not see any trace of. This fanciful multiplication of the three existing churches into seven may be explained by the fact that, throughout Asia Minor, the Turks constantly give the favourite surnames of the three churches, or, the seven churches, to a great number of sanctuaries. The reason of this seems unaccountable.

After having seen the church, I visited the different parts of the monastery, which is a building occupying the front and the lateral wings of the yard situated before the church. To the left of the entrance are the dormitory, the dining-room, and the class-rooms of the seminary. About twenty lads are here brought up for holy orders, or receive a liberal education. Paintings of the old heroes of Armenian nationality, like that of St. Vartan, hung up in the class-room, were signs that national feelings still animated the soul of the worthy

Abbot Mighirditch. In his zeal to enlighten and instruct his countrymen, this prelate has devoted himself to the publication of a periodical review which appears twice a month, and is circulated over all parts of the world where the Armenian nationality has a representative. I was not able to learn the name of that pamphlet, but what struck me as characteristic, and not without a certain *à propos*, was the figure printed at the head. This figure represented the dove of the Deluge flying over the lake of Van, and carrying the olive-branch in his bill. No allegory could be more significant and poetical; the scattered members of the Armenian race receiving thus the dove which brings them tidings from the land of their forefathers. But does the figure of this bird of promise mean that Armenia is on the eve of rising from the deluge of barbarism to new existence? I may add that the printing establishment created by Mighirditch is the only one existing in Koordistan and Armenia.

The night entertainment which the people of the monastery prepared in my honour was as good as it could possibly be. There were three dishes, sweet *entremets*, tolerably good wine at dinner, in the morning coffee, and even tea with milk in the English fashion. These delicacies, it must be acknowledged, do not cost the good monks much, as the whole of the fine property in the neighbourhood belongs to

the monastery, and the labour necessary for its cultivation is performed gratis by the faithful, who by turns come to work on it. In the morning, breakfast having been served and our horses being ready, I took leave of the people of the convent, thanking them most cordially for the hospitality they had afforded me, and returned to Van.

CHAPTER IX.

Origin of the Koords—Their Nationality—Their Language—Their Religion and Superstitions—The Rock of the Sheyts—Discovery of an Assyrian Monument.

BEFORE undertaking the description of the country lying between Van and the Persian frontier, it is necessary to give a cursory account of the different populations which inhabit Koordistan, and to refer to those special questions which bear upon their social and national existence.

In this epoch of the revival of old nationalities, when races and nations unknown up to the present day are germinating like mushrooms in a field, many will be surprised to hear that, besides the new-born Czechs, Roumains, Bulgarians, or Austro-Hungarians, there is still another nation claiming recognition under the name of Koords. To those who are unacquainted with the existence of the Koords as a race, the question may arise whether, after all, such a people really exists, or whether they are to consider this so-called Koordish nation as a pendant of that new nationality said to have been lately discovered by Mr. Palgrave in the neighbourhood of Trebizond.

Do travellers and writers really believe, some may be inclined to exclaim, that there are no limits to public credulity—that it is prepared to receive any statements which they may be pleased to make. The reader may reassure himself; it is not with a fanciful narrative that I should venture to entertain him, nor do I consider it as worth the trouble to treat of a nation or people the existence of which is to many a matter of doubt; my object is to define clearly the actual condition of a race whose existence is found to have been recorded as far back as twenty-three centuries ago.

When Xenophon,* harassed by the cavalry and light troops of the Persians, found himself in the most critical position, being unable to effect the passage of the Tigris, or to retreat by the route through which he had been advancing, the Greek general decided on examining the prisoners he had with him, and became acquainted through them with the fact that, following a course to the north, he should enter a mountainous region inhabited by the Karduks. Though Xenophon seems to have been ignorant of the name by which this part of the country was known to its inhabitants, it is evident that it could have been no other than that which is known in modern geography as the Anti-Taurus,

* "The Retreat of the Ten Thousand," book iii. chap. v.

or Hakkiari Mountains, situated to the north (the bear) of the Tigris. From the fact that the Hakkiari Mountains of our day coincide exactly with the mountainous region inhabited by the Karduks, does it follow that the Koords, who inhabit at present these mountains, are of the same race as those who lived in that region at the epoch of Xenophon's passage? That the Koords of modern times are the descendants of the Karduks is a point on which ethnologists generally agree, though some doubts have been entertained on this point. The analogy existing between the modern name of Koords and the ancient one of Karduks has been considered by some authorities as being too far fetched to prove their identity.

When considering a question of this kind it is not fair in my opinion to limit the discussion within the narrow bounds which philologists have established as a basis for their arguments—viz., the more or less resemblance which the name given to a nation at one remote period may have with that by which it is known at a subsequent epoch. Why do they limit their investigations to the way of spelling and the manner of pronouncing adopted by the historians of one peculiar epoch or country? Should they not rather accept as so many *data* worthy of being taken into consideration the manner in which other nations pronounce and write the same name? It is clear that our ethnological information will be more accurate if

we extend our researches to those nations which, being nearer to the source, deserve to be looked upon as more competent authorities.

Before attempting, therefore, to give a final judgment grounded on the mere fact that the Greek name of Kardukhi and the present name of Koords are not quite alike, let us inquire how the Persians, the Arabs, and the Turks call in their respective languages the Koords, with whom they have been for ages in constant contact. This way of investigating such a question is, I think, the best one in order to arrive as near the truth as possible. Now it must be observed that the Persians, who have had the longest period of domination over Koordistan, call its inhabitants *Kurd*, giving to the letter *vau* a sound which approaches to the French pronunciation of the letter *u*. The Turks, the present masters of the country, pronounce the word Koord in the same way as the Persians, with this difference only that they change the *d* into *t*, thus pronouncing it *Kurt*. The Arabs, however, who extended their empire over Koordistan in the middle ages, give to this nation the name neither of Kurd nor Kurt, but *Kart* in the singular, and *Ekrat* in the plural, so that in Arabic Taifei-Ekrat means the race of the Koords. This Arabic noun *Kart* has been adopted by both the Persians and the Turks, who in their official language make use of it exclusively. As for the Koords themselves, the name by which they

distinguish their nationality is *Kartmantche*, that is, Koord. Could there be a more striking resemblance between any words than that which exists between the Kart or Kard of the Arabs, the Kartmantche of the Koords, and the Karduks of Xenophon? By making due allowance for the corruption to which all names or words are subject by the laws of phonetic change when passing from the mouth of one nation to another, it must be acknowledged that the Koords of our days are without any doubt the Karduks of old, and that this nation still occupies the same country which it possessed twenty-three centuries previous to our epoch.

The identity of the Koords with the ancient inhabitants of the Anti-Taurus once ascertained, it is useless to retrace their origin through the records of a far distant period. It will be enough to say that the Koords belong to the Arian family. Their regular and handsome features show, moreover, that they have no connexion whatever with the Tartar, Calmuck, and Mongol races.

Are the Koords to be regarded as the descendants of the Parthians? This is a problem for and against which much can be said. It is true that Herodotus, Strabo, and Justin establish no connexion between these two nations; but the fact that both the Karduks and the Parthians originate from the borders of the Caspian—the former from modern Ghilan, the

latter from Khorasan (ancient Parthia)—gives weight to the opinion that the Karduks and Parthians are but one people. Besides the identity which can be traced in the warlike dispositions and other characteristics common to both, it may be observed that since the Assyrian epoch the Parthians and the Karduks are the only people who, in that part of Asia, have maintained their nationality against the encroachments of either eastern or western conquerors; that is, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. At one time they actually succeeded in asserting their independence and established the mighty empire of the Parthians, which, notwithstanding the hostility of the Persians and of the Romans, lasted for the space of 500 years, till A.D. 220.

With the downfall of the Parthian empire a phenomenon almost unparalleled in history presents itself to the attention of the observer,—that is the complete disappearance within a few days of the Parthians as a nation and as a race.—Where did they go? What became of them? No one knows, as history never once mentions their name again. In searching for them amongst the different nations which occupy the territory that formed their empire, the only race we find having any affinity or analogy with them is that of the Karduks or Koords, who have inherited from them the same independent spirit, and the same hatred of both Persians and Turks; for, as regards both, the

Koords of to-day represent the position which the Parthians held towards the ancient Persians and Romans.

Though more or less subjected to all the conquerors who for the last three thousand years have established their sway over those regions which at present constitute Koordistan, the Koords have never ceased to own a distinct nationality. At the time of Xenophon, when that part of Asia was under the Persian rule, the Karduks were a separate nation, for that writer states:* "They (*the prisoners*) add that that people dwell in a mountainous region, and that it is a warlike race and independent of the king; that once the king sent an army twelve myriads strong against them, and that on account of the difficulty of the country not a single man escaped out of the whole army; that when, however, this people is at peace with the satrap of the plain, then reciprocal relations are established between the two nations."

Under the rule of the house of Seleucus, in the time of the Romans, during the days of the Sassanide dynasty and of the Arab conquest, the name of Koordistan seems almost obliterated under the yoke of its conquerors.

Since the day that Turkish dominion extended itself over Koordistan, the Koordish nation has con-

* "The Retreat of the Ten Thousand," book iii. chap. v.

stantly been wavering between the two rival powers of the Sunnites and Shiahs, siding, according to exigencies, sometimes with one, sometimes with the other competitor. These destructive wars of conquest, which, under the pretext of religious zeal, were fiercely waged between the Turks and the Persians, were naturally followed by a period of common weakness, both empires finding it beyond their power to exercise authority over their extensive dominions. A respite was then allowed to the Koords, which enabled them to preserve their nationality from the invading influences and pressure of the contending powers. Once left in possession of a semi-independent existence, these ferocious nomads were exposed to all the horrors and vicissitudes which are inseparable from a state of anarchy and disorder. Their internal feuds served the purpose of their powerful neighbours, whose interest has always been that of exciting their passions and fomenting their disunion.

It is a subject of wonder that after the lapse of so many centuries, in spite we may say of all the conquering hosts that have overrun and subdued their country, the Koords should have succeeded in maintaining a sort of semi-independence, preserving their nationality as distinct from that of all their neighbours as it was in former days. It must be looked upon as a surprising phenomenon that this people, who, unlike the Bulgarians, the Czechs, and others,

have had neither kings nor emperors, neither iron nor tin crown as a national emblem, to boast of, should have always remained Koords in spite of all. But what will ethnologists and others say when they hear that the Koords not only were without any dynasty of their own, or any form of political constitution which could serve as a basis to their nationality, but that those powerful links of social and political existence which are known under the name of religion, historical traditions, literature, and even the arts of writing and reading, have ever been unknown amongst them? One parallel only can be found, I think, in the history of humanity, that of a people who, being scattered all over the surface of the earth without tradition, history, or any form of political existence, have nevertheless maintained their peculiar character: that is, the Bohemians or Gipsies.

Having shown how the Koords have existed as a nation in bygone ages, and that their nationality has never been submerged by the tide of time and events, a short account of their history since the beginning of this century will serve to prove that their nationality, far from existing in a dormant and supine state, has not failed to give proofs of its vitality. Three times during the course of this century the national aspirations of the Koords have impelled them to throw off the authority of the Sultan and conquer their independence. The first

movement was the rising of Mehemet Pasha of Revanduz, in 1834. Though the initiatory proceedings of the Pasha were concealed, his object was undoubtedly that of ridding his country of the Ottoman domination. The second instance in which the Koords attempted to assert their national independence was the movement organized by Ahmed Pasha, hereditary Prince of Suleimanieh, who collected a regular army composed of several battalions of infantry, with artillery and cavalry, and marched his forces against the Turkish Pasha resident at Bagdad. This event happened about the year 1843. The third and most important rebellion took place in 1847, when the Koordish chief Bedir-khan Bey raised a large host with which he fell first on the Nestorians, and subsequently on the Turkish army led against him by Omer Pasha.

These events have been interpreted by the Porte as mere attempts of a seditious and turbulent character, having nothing whatever to do either with national feelings or national aspirations. The insurrectionary movements which have taken place in Koordistan must, however, be considered as significant proofs that a higher principle than that of a commonplace highway-robbery lies at the bottom of the question. Otherwise, how is the fact to be explained that during the short period of fifteen years three such attempts should have been made in an organized

and systematic way, the first in the south, the second at the western extremity, and the last towards the northern part of Koordistan? It seems as if the revolutionary fever had inflamed the brains of the whole mass of the Koordish nation. From my personal experience, having been thrown into contact with many of the chiefs of the Koordish national movements, as Ahmed Pasha of Suleimanieh and Resul Pasha, with all their brothers and sons, I can affirm, without fear of exaggerating, that the sentiment of nationality and the love of independence are as deeply rooted in the heart of the Koords as in that of any other nation.

Having thus treated the subject of Koordish nationality in its past and present state, it remains for me to show the change which has taken place in the country occupied by that nation in former days and that over which it extends now, as well as the difference in the number of the population and the transformations it has undergone. It must be observed, however, that whilst the country which Xenophon calls Koordistan, or the Kardukian mountains, presents a limited extent of territory known under the denomination of the Anti-Taurus, or the Hakkiari mountains, the limits which we have ascribed to the Koordistan of our days embrace a great part of the country occupied once by the Medes, Assyrians, Parthians, &c.

This can be accounted for in several ways. First, because it is not quite certain that the Koords or Karduks did not extend beyond the limits which Xenophon's narrative assigns to them, as he was only reconnoitring the tract of country through which he proposed to lead his army. The Koords may have extended as far south as Revanduz and Suleimanieh, although the Greek historian knew nothing about it. Secondly, this extension of the Koordish territory from the mountains towards the plains to the south and to the north may have taken place at a subsequent period, as a result of the expansion of the population through procreation and the fusion into it of the Median and Assyrian races. The tide of conquest throws back one conquered people over the other, and often gives rise to the amalgamation of races subjected to a common bond of servitude. The nomadic freedom of the Koords may have been considered a blessing by many of the conquered nations who did not hesitate to join the tribes in their peregrinations and wanderings.* The complete disappearance of the very name of the Assyrian, Parthian, and Median races may thus be explained, while a reason

* When, in 1860, after the massacres of Syria, Fuad Pasha established the reign of terror at Damascus, many of the inhabitants fled into the desert and joined the Arab tribes, with whom they are now amalgamated.

is found for the great increase of the Koordish population.

The transformation and change to which I have alluded as having befallen the Koords is this :—The Koords, according to Xenophon, were a warlike race, accustomed to fight with arrows and stones, whereas in our days they are born horsemen and fight with the lance and the sword. It is true, indeed, that the mountaineers of Hakkiari are very good shots, and would form a body of first-rate riflemen ; but in the mass they constitute but a fraction, and the Koords as a nation must be looked upon as being exclusively horsemen. This change in the qualities and tastes of the Koordish warriors is a natural consequence of the subsequent development of their race in the plains of Armenia and Assyria. The means of defence and attack are dictated to men by the nature of the ground on which they live, and thus the Koord in the mountains is a foot soldier, while his kinsman in the plain is a horseman.

A separate language is the first qualification for a distinct nationality. The Koords have a language of their own, which has no connexion with either Turkish or Persian. The constant intercourse, however, which the Koords have with these two nations has had for result to introduce into their idiom a large stock of Turkish, and, above all, of Persian words. It would

be difficult for me to give any idea of the Koordish language, as there are no books from which it may be learned, and I have seldom heard it spoken. In my relations and dealings with the Koordish chiefs I used to employ Turkish, and the use of the Koordish language was rigorously forbidden by me, in order to prevent the Koords from plotting amongst themselves and cheating me even while they were in my presence.

Some peculiarities of this dialect are worth recording, and I will state them as I have heard them, without insuring their grammatical exactness. The Koordish negative is *no*, like the English, Italian, and French negative. It is pronounced exactly like the Italian *no*, with an open and sonorous sound. This resemblance is a point of curiosity when we take into consideration that neither the Persians nor the Turks, in the midst of whom the Koords find themselves, have a similar negative particle. Another peculiarity is that the terminations in *o* are very much used in Koordish, and that the Koords contract and shorten all proper names. For instance, instead of calling a fellow by his name, Mehemet, the Koord, putting aside the due respect owed to the namesake of the Prophet, will shout "Mukho!" In like manner Hassan is turned into Hasso, Ali into Halo, Abdulrakman into Harro; which latter has something of our English Harry. A traveller amongst the tribes is sure to be greeted with some very familiar phrases

by his host. For instance, "Serdjivani, sersevani," which means, "Be welcome on my head, on my eyes!"

The Koordish language contains almost as many dialects as there are tribes of that race—that is to say, a great many. It often occurs that one tribe does not understand the other, though they both form part of the same nation. The Koords of Dersimdagh are not able to comprehend those of Bayazid or Suleimanieh, and *vice versâ*.

The Koordish language has no written characters of its own, and, of course, no literature. The Persian idiom being more familiar to them, the Koords who must use the pen write in Persian. The clerks and interpreters who are in the service of the chiefs are, for this reason, almost invariably Persians. This predilection of the Koords for the Persian language is well grounded, for the latter is a mother-tongue, whereas the Turkish idiom is a mixture of all sorts of languages. As for Koordish literature, it can scarcely be said yet to have any existence, though several years ago some learned Koordish doctors of divinity (D.D.'s) made an attempt to publish works written in their own language.

The Koords are of the Mussulman religion; but as everyone in our days of universal knowledge knows something about the faith of Mohammed, there is no necessity for entering here into the subject. Of the

four Mussulman creeds, the Koords have espoused that of the sect of the Shiahs, which is the national creed of the Persians, thus throwing overboard the tenets of the Sunnites, who have the Sultan of Constantinople as their pope. The Koords, who are a queer race, have something curious even in the way of observing the ceremonies of their faith. It is well known that the Mussulman religion devotes the month of Ramazan to a strict fast, which is kept by abstaining from eating or drinking during the whole interval separating the morning twilight from that of the evening. The strict Sunnites and Shiahs not only remain during the whole of the day without eating or drinking, but also abstain from smoking, saying that smoke breaks the fast as well as anything else. The Koords do not quite agree on this point, maintaining that smoke is nothing—or next to it; and as the Prophet has not mentioned anything about it, they consider themselves perfectly justified in taking up their pipes and their hookas in the middle of the day. This freedom of behaviour is a matter of scandal amongst the purest believers, but the Koords say, How can smoking be forbidden, if in the days of our prophet such a thing did not exist?

As is easy to conceive, the Turks have a very poor opinion of the intrinsic religious value of a Koord. It is a common saying that a saint cannot come out of Koordistan. The Koords, as a rule, are not very fer-

vent in their devotions, and it is not a common case to meet with one who is very exact in fulfilling the duty incumbent on every Mussulman—to say his prayers five times during the twenty-four hours; he is too much of a rover to stick to permanent and methodic habits. The Shekhs are held in high veneration by the Koords, who acknowledge their authority in all religious points. These Shekhs and some Hodjas are the spiritual leaders of the tribe, though often their influence extends also to temporal matters and political questions. Whenever any religious controversy arises, the Shekhs are consulted, and their oracle is invariably accepted as law. The interpretation of the Koranic law takes place through this channel, and their sentences admit of no appeal.

Superstition has a far stronger hold on the ignorant minds of the Koords than religion. They believe in the *Pirs* (holy protectors), in whose power and intercession they trust. Their fear of the *Idjins* is childish and ludicrous. The *Idjins* and the *Periis* are the malicious and the benign spirits whose action over mankind is, according to the Koran, all-powerful. To these supernatural agents the *Sheyts* must be added. Under this denomination the Mussulmans comprise all the martyrs of Islam, those that have fallen in the defence of the faith of Mohammed. The tombs of the Sheyts are considered holy, and the miracles performed by them, as well as their appari-

tions before the living, are believed to be phenomena of common occurrence. In the belief of the Koords these troops of wandering spirits form a kind of fluctuating population, as nomadic in their tastes as the living inhabitants of the country. Their mission seems to be to wander about the valleys and the mountains, either coaxing or bullying poor mortals.

In order to illustrate this peculiar subject, I will here relate two curious incidents which happened to me, showing to what extent superstition can blind the human intellect. At a distance of three quarters of an hour from Kotur, there is a small village called Guiveran. Close to this village there exists a hollow rock which is said to be the grave of some Sheyts, or martyrs. The Koords of the surrounding neighbourhood hold this spot in veneration, and often resort to it as a place of pilgrimage. A magnificent old walnut-tree, the finest of the sort to be found in this country, stands before the rock, which it partly shelters under its wide-spread branches. The sanctity of the rock seems to be shared in some way or other by the walnut-tree, which the Koords include within the limits of the sanctuary as part of the property of the Sheyts. Every pilgrim, on leaving this holy recess, ties a small scrap of linen to one of the branches of the tree, hoping thus that the Sheyts will not forget that he has paid them his visit.

Either from natural causes or the ardent devotion of the pilgrims, many of the lower branches of the walnut-tree had been getting rotten and falling to the ground in heaps. In one of my excursions to this spot, I was surprised at seeing the large stock of dry fuel which had thus been accumulating, and the idea came into my mind to make use of it, so as to get rid of the smoke and nuisance of a dry-dung fire. Accordingly, on the following day, several soldiers were despatched to the spot provided with hatchets and mules, and in the afternoon a large supply of first-rate wood was stored for my private use, as well as for that of my officers. The tidings of this sacrilegious attempt to carry off the wood which, rotten or not, is the property of the Sheyts, spread like electricity all over the country. The Koords were at a loss, and did not know what to say to such a thing; many trembling lest the Sheyts should retaliate upon them for the insult.

That very evening a deputation, headed by the *Mudir*, prefect, Ahmed Agha, and composed of the influential gentlemen of the country, made their appearance solemnly before me. After a moment's pause the chief of the deputation opened the momentous question respecting the wood with an air of visible perturbation. Their remonstrances were coupled with some friendly advice, by which I was made to understand that the Sheyts, the Idjins, &c., do not joke, and

that they might take their revenge on me by condemning me to epileptic fits, paralytic attacks, and other such amenities. "Well," said I, "I do not think you ought to be alarmed on my account; the Sheyts and the Idjins do not care about the wood, otherwise they would have administered to me an epileptic fit on the very instant."

While I was thus talking, the sacred logs of wood which had been piled up in my chimney began to blaze away, crackling with some animation. The Koords and the Mudir, who were seated calmly on the divan, assumed an anxious and feverish look. The crackling had on them the effect that a well-executed volley has on the nerves of a pacific spectator. Their eyes, their mouths, and their heads shook and oscillated under the influence of their excited muscles. Seeing them in such a state, I endeavoured to joke them on the point, and said, smiling, "Don't you think that if the Idjins, &c., were to have a look at such a bonny fire, they would find this fun first-rate?" Of course the members of the deputation affected to take the thing as a joke, and, half smiling, half sneering, left me to enjoy my fire-side as I chose.

The sacred-wood incident did not, however, stop here. It happened, by a queer coincidence, that, some time after, when all the wood had been consumed and reduced to ashes, typhus-fever broke out amongst

the troops, producing a great mortality. The causes from which this epidemic arose had no connexion whatever either with the Sheyts or their grave; they were of quite a different nature.* However, the Koords raised their clamours, and called earth and heaven as witnesses of their prophecy. They did not hesitate to assert that the vengeance of the Sheyts was quite evident, and that, had it not been for my sacrilegious act, no such calamity would ever have happened. There was one point, however, which they did not know how to account for. Instead of seeing me laid up in bed ready to breathe my last, to their great astonishment they used to observe me walking through the hospital and the barracks, looking as well as ever. How is it, they asked themselves, that the Sheyts and the Idjins should be taking their revenge on so many poor, innocent soldiers, while the culprit, who ought to pay for his misdeeds, remains unpunished? At a loss how to explain this riddle, they managed to get out of the scrape by saying that I was such a devil that the Sheyts, Idjins, and their other comrades were afraid of me. Surely this was not having a very flattering opinion of the power of their spiritual protectors, the Idjins, the Sheyts, and so on.

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* See "La Turquie sous le Règne d'Abdul-Aziz." Par F. Millingen. Paris. 1868.

The other incident relating to Koordish superstition took place under different circumstances, and had important results, as it led to the discovery of an Assyrian monument. On one occasion, when several of the Koords had come to spend the evening with me, our conversation fell on the Idjins and other spirits, whose portentous apparitions were amply related by the different members of the party. Hadji-khan, a person considered to be well informed on all matters, told us that at a place called Pagan, there was an ancient temple, a remnant of the idolatrous ages, which was known by all to be inhabited by spirits. According to his account no one had ever been able to get access into this building, as the door had been shut tight and fast by the magic skill of the Idjins. He added that many attempts had been made to open it, either through the explosive force of gunpowder, or by means of spikes, spades, iron bars, and other such mining apparatus, but to no purpose. What was still more astonishing was that a mysterious hole existed, which was the only means of communication left between the interior of the temple and the outside. Hadji-khan asserted that a noise was heard sometimes coming from within the sacred building; the sound was like that of human voices, intermixed with the vibrations of metallic bodies, and was heard distinctly. It was believed that large treasures had been accumulated there by the spirits.

This extraordinary legend of Hadji-khan was backed up and rendered authentic by means of several heavy oaths, accompanied by a good shower of them which the other Koords hastened to pour out in chorus.

This account was so extraordinary, though stated with so much self-reliance, that I decidedly felt as if my wits were deserting me at that moment. I could not doubt that the fellows seated opposite to me were men who had eyes and ears as good as those with which I am gifted myself, and that those organs must be fit for something. If so many individuals have seen with their eyes and heard with their ears what they assert they have seen, one must think that there should be some ground for their statements. It is true that allowances must always be made for imagination, and for those illusions to which men who live in the darkness of ignorance may be subject; but I was mistaken, since I learned then that if ignorance alone obscures the sight, when allied with superstition it not only prevents a man from seeing what he ought to see, but makes him see things which never did nor will exist.

As generally happens in such cases, my mind got inflamed by the idea that something might be found in this ancient temple, the existence of which no one apparently had imagined. Making all due allowances for the superstition and credulity of

the natives, I began to hope that a bit of good luck might turn out of this affair. Many a good fortune has risen out of similar cases, why shouldn't something good happen to me too? Suppose, for instance, I said to myself, that I were to succeed in getting access to the temple, and that to my great surprise and delight I found a little pet of a divinity whose venerated figure was beautifully carved in massive gold, and whose eyes were represented by two dazzling Kohi-noors, why I should then become a Rothschild in an instant! But, taking the worst side of the case, suppose I am doomed to disappointment, and that, instead of finding either gold or copper, a huge monster of the family of Nineveh bulls greets me from his open jaws with a hearty welcome into the temple, then, too, my fortune is insured, because, as a matter of course, I and my bull would have a right to a comfortable berth; I should become an ambassador, and the bull would enter the British Museum.

Prompted to action by these sanguine expectations, I decided on exploring the mysterious place as soon as my duties would allow. Four days afterwards, I made everything ready for the expedition on a large scale. Twenty men were to accompany me, carrying with them six pack-horses, several spades, spikes, shovels, and other such utensils, as well as a good provision of gunpowder to blow up an entry into the temple. Our exploring party left Kotur, following the right bank

of one of the tributaries of the Kotur river, and directing its course westward. The distance between Kotur and the village of Pagan, in the neighbourhood of which this temple was said to be, is not much more than four hours.

A keen, cold wind rendered our march not quite as pleasant as might have been wished, for the frosty ground and the thick ice which served as a border in many places to the stream, obliged us to advance slowly and with precaution. On reaching Pagan we saw before us a very diminutive Koordish village of the same description as all those that are to be met with in this country. Without losing any time we took two guides from amongst the peasants, and continued to ascend the mountain on which the temple stood. This mountain attains a considerable elevation, as all the way from Kotur our road had been gradually rising. Naturally in the high regions from the village up to the summit the ground was found covered with thick snow. At three quarters of an hour's distance from the village, the mountain presents a granite formation, and divides itself into two enormous rocks split asunder, through which a torrent finds an outlet. It was only when we emerged from this defile on the other side of the mountain that a large door, of a grand appearance, presented itself before us. This door was cut at the foot of a rock, and faced the west. From the threshold

down towards the ravine a series of steps were carved out of the stone, resembling very much the footsteps of a throne.

Once at the foot of the rock, I left my horse to the care of the soldiers, and, taking a good stick in my hand, began to explore and examine the spot most minutely. To find an entrance being the most essential part of the business, I directed my steps immediately towards the door. This door is sixteen yards in height and five in width, and is cut with admirable skill in the rock. Its state of preservation is such that it looks as if it had been recently finished. The threshold and the cornice are simple, without any carvings or ornament. On the wall of the door, however, there is a large inscription in cuneiform characters, forming six lines. This inscription stands close to the top, a little under the cornice. All around the cornice the rock has been nicely cut so as to leave a border wall two yards wide on both sides, and ten on the top of the door. The appearance of this ancient monument has something imposing and mysterious, and no other building in the world can convey a better idea of its grandeur than the Jubilee Gate of the Vatican, which, being walled-up, attracts the curiosity and imposes on the vivid imagination of the Catholic believer.

As it became evident that no admission had ever been obtained through this door by any mortal, nor

by the sharpest among the Idjins and Periis, I naturally gave up all hope of getting in from that quarter. I then climbed the rock, and did actually succeed in getting on to a small terrace carved in it, which corresponded exactly with the summit of the door. I there found two rows of five holes each, resembling fire-places in a kitchen. It is to be remarked that two similar rows, disposed in the same way, were visible on the steps to the right and left of the door. These holes must evidently have been used for sacrificial purposes. From this place, looking downwards, the high elevation of the door and of the steps can be appreciated.

I then again attempted to find the secret entrance or hole which was said to give access to the interior of this reputed temple, but to no purpose. Wishing nevertheless to reap some reward for the trouble I had been putting myself to, I decided on taking a copy of the cuneiform inscription as a remembrance of the spot and of my expedition. This was no sooner said than attempted. The ropes which I had taken the precaution bring with me were now found useful. At my direction my men securely tied me up, and improvised a sort of seat made of a piece of wood. Ten men, five on one side and as many on the other, then took hold of the ropes and lowered me down to the level of the inscription. The nervous sensation which is experienced upon feeling oneself dropped into a ravine

two or three hundred yards deep, is not easy to describe. My frame was seized by a sort of shiver, while a rush of blood to the head gave me an attack of giddiness. This momentary agitation soon passed, however, and I then began to copy the inscription as well as I could.

The task, however, did not turn out to be so easy as I had thought when looking at the inscription from below. In the not very comfortable position of a pendulum, I could hardly make use of my hands, and I found it exceedingly difficult to draw in an intelligible shape the cuneiform characters. I succeeded, however, in spite of all difficulties in copying a portion of the first line. The process having become rather irksome, and seeing the impossibility of getting through the whole of the work, I gave up all hopes of success and made the signal to my men to pull me up again. Had I been acquainted then with the process generally used in such cases, that of sticking on the characters sheets of wet blotting-paper, I might easily have taken the copy, but ignorant as I was of the method I could not help failing in the attempt.

Coming down then from the rock, I took to exploring the lower part of the ravine with the hope of discovering something which might throw light on the meaning of that mysterious gate. The stones of a burial ground, situated in an open space at the

bottom of the valley, being the only relics of a past age that could be seen round about, thither I directed my steps, accompanied by several men armed with their spades and pikes. On examining the tombs it soon became evident that they belonged to a recent period of the Mussulman era, as the head-stones faced in the direction of Mecca. Besides these tombs, fragments of pottery were found scattered about the country. They were not, however, of a nature to lead to any inference with regard to their antiquity.

Baffled thus in my researches after something tangible which might reveal to me the meaning of the existence in that solitary spot of this mysterious door, I endeavoured to arrive at a plausible explanation by surveying from a military point of view the topographic features of the surrounding country. My observations led me to conjecture that this monument was carved in the rock in order to commemorate some exploit of the Assyrian age. The fact that this ridge of rocky hills, intersected by deep ravines, occupies a central position between the two routes which, parting from the Persian frontier, converge towards Van, shows that an army must have selected this position in order to compel any invader to give battle on a ground admirably suited for defensive manœuvres.

With the approach of night I beat a retreat and

returned to Pagan, where the Koordish peasants entertained me with that kind of hospitality which is proper to their hovels. As can easily be understood, I was looked upon by the natives, on my arrival, as a wonderful individual who had just been hunting up the Idjins and Periis, and I had naturally all sorts of queer questions to answer.

The superstition of the Koords is not limited to their belief in the existence of spirits. All the absurd imaginations and prejudices which find access to Oriental minds are fully endorsed and supported by them. Good and bad luck, the good eye and the evil eye (*nazar*), the wonderful power attributed to some people of extirpating fever by reciting verses from the Koran and tying a string to the pulse, the cure of complaints by casting lead into a basin full of water, however miraculous they may appear, are articles of faith with the Koords. In every tribe, there are lots of Khodjas and Shekhs of both sexes, who are considered first-rate mediums, endowed with great spiritual and magnetic powers.

CHAPTER X.

Character of the Koords—Shekh Ali of the Milans—Ahmed-Agha of the Mugurus—Koordish Depredations—The Bildash Female-Bandits—Manners, Customs, and Resources of the Koords—Koordish Women—General Remarks.

THE character of the Koordish race has many of the peculiar features common to all nomads. The desert, the plain, the highlands, the tent, the flock, the horse, the spear,—in short, all that is connected with the toils, pangs, and excitement of nomadic life, moulds the character of the Koord, doomed to undergo the law of perpetual motion. Whilst roving about in search of pasturage, or after plunder, the Koord acquires the predatory instinct and the restlessness of the vulture, the acuteness and agility of the fox, together with other peculiarities of ravenous animals. In constant strife with their neighbours or amongst themselves, the Koords constitute an essentially warlike people, ever ready to meet an enemy, always on the alert, employing sometimes open strength, more frequently stratagems, quick in their movements, cunning and cruel in their exploits.

The mixture of good and bad qualities which is to be remarked in the character of the Koords is, as has already been said, common to all nomadic tribes, whether Arabs, Koords, or Kirgiz. In some respects, however, the Koord must be considered somewhat inferior to the chivalrous Arab nomad who, according to the opinion universally adopted, respects the rights of hospitality, and protects those who seek shelter under his tent. The Koord is treacherous, and does not feel the least scruple in staining his hands with the blood of the guest who has a claim to his protection. The perpetration of crimes of this sort frequently occurs in Koordistan. Of this description were the murder of the German traveller Schultz, who fell a victim to the treachery of Khan Mahmud in 1830; the assassination of Musho, the Jewish merchant; and of Ahmed Effendi, director of the Quarantine at Kotur, who was knocked down and thrown into a river by the men of the Mudir Ahmed-Agha. These instances of the violation of the rights of hospitality are the most notorious that have come to my knowledge. As for less sensational murders, they are of daily occurrence.

Every chief of a tribe, or of a district, has at his disposal a band of assassins, of which he and his nearest relations are members. This band serves to settle accounts with anyone with whom the chief has a difference. Speedy work follows the orders

of the chief, and the booty is divided in shares of various magnitudes, according to the importance of each member of the band.

Gratitude is not a virtue in high repute with the Koords. Not only do they soon forget, on the least pretence, the good they have received, but often also repay it with ill-doing. An incident which happened to me is well suited, I think, to show that the Koords are generally little aware of the nature of this virtue. It will likewise serve to give the reader an insight into the condition of human affairs and social relations in those distant regions.

Shekh Ali was the chief of the Milans, a tribe which had been persecuted and completely ruined by a coalition of several hostile tribes. These had marched against the Milans in order to throw them back into the Persian territory and to seize their lands, when the appearance of my soldiers amongst the belligerents rescued the tribe from destruction, and compelled their enemies to draw back their forces. On the approach of winter, however, the poor Milans found themselves in a pitiful position. Their territory and villages having been occupied by the enemy, they were lēft destitute, without home or shelter, exposed to all the rigours of that severe season. The tidings of their distress having reached me, I insisted that the villages near Kotur should offer their hospitality to the families of the

Milans, who had already begun to die at the rate of ten or twenty a day.

Homes once provided for them, something more remained to be done. That was to furnish them with the means of subsistence, as otherwise the whole tribe would have died of starvation instead of perishing from typhus. Accordingly the day that Shekh Ali, with his family and tribe, took possession of his new quarters, I hastened to send him, at my own expense, three cargoes of flour, which I requested him to accept as a token of my sympathy for his sufferings. Shekh Ali presented himself to me a few days afterwards and expressed his feelings of gratitude for what I had done for himself and family, also requesting me to exert my influence with the contractor who was furnishing the rations of my regiment, in order to induce him to supply the Milan tribe with a certain amount of corn. On my demand the contractor consented to enter into an arrangement by which it was stipulated that a certain quantity of corn should be delivered to Shekh Ali, he on his side incurring the obligation of paying back the amount due for it within the term of three months.

All this was done to the great satisfaction of the Milans, who declared that I was their deliverer and benefactor. But these generous feelings lasted only up to the epoch at which, according to the agreement, the payment became due. Like debtors of all climates,

Shekh Ali began to keep himself out of sight, and, the term of payment having arrived, took to excuses and pretexts in order to evade it. The contractor did not hesitate to say that he would hold me answerable for the amount, because, knowing well the Koords, he would have never advanced them anything, nor would he have entered into transactions with them, had it not been on the strength of my word. The Koords, as a rule, have a peculiar dodge of their own. They elude payment as cleverly as they can while they are still compelled to remain in their hovels; but once the spring arrived, off they bolt to their summer quarters, where few creditors are so foolish as to go after their money. The debt is thus inevitably thrown back to the next winter season.

As in a few days the Milans were expected to be off to their summer pasturage, I decided on taking the law into my own hands, in order to show Shekh Ali that I was not to be made a fool of. Accordingly, having received information that he, together with the other chiefs of the Milans, was to spend the night at the residence of the Mudir Ahmed-Agha, I despatched to the Mudir one of my captains, together with a detachment of troops, with the object of obtaining immediate payment. The instructions given to the officer were to the effect that he should post his men in convenient places, so as to be able to watch from a dis-

tance the house of the Mudir. The captain was then to proceed to it and to enjoin the Mudir not to let Shekh Ali and his companions free before he had paid the requisite sum. It is evident that had the Mudir himself been a trustworthy character, no such coercive measures would have been necessary, and the matter might have been settled through his authority; but, as Koords always stick to each other, I had every reason to fear that the Mudir would be lenient enough to wink at his guest's escape.

The plan succeeded. The Koords, seeing themselves caught by the collar, sent to their homes for money, and on the following day fulfilled their engagements up to the last penny, not omitting, however, to try, by all sorts of roundabout ways, to avoid payment of part of the sum due. Hard cash, however, was my ultimatum, and on that condition only Shekh Ali was released. This chief, I may observe, while refusing to pay a paltry sum of a hundred pounds, was worth fifteen thousand pounds bullion, which he kept tightly in his chest, or buried God knows where. This dirty way of dealing towards one who had protected them as I had, is a fair specimen of the character of the Koords as to gratitude. Lying and intriguing are the elements of the only kind of diplomacy which prevails amongst them, and they have a natural disposition to deceit. As for bare-faced lying, there are few people on the

surface of the globe who could compete with them. I remember to have been once present at a council composed of seventy or eighty chiefs, in which the whole lot were swearing false in chorus, uttering with harmony the oath *Ashedu-billah*, in denial of a thing which, to myself and to many others, was known to be perfectly true. Craft and duplicity are qualities innate in all Orientals, and the Koords must to a certain extent be excused if, in their intercourse with such cunning folks as the Turks and Persians, they endeavour to do their best to out-manœuvre their masters. Some of the Koordish chiefs are so dissimulating and Machiavellian in their policy, that, seated at a conference, they might compete to advantage for the prize of a tortuous diplomacy with many of the disciples of Metternich or Talleyrand.

Ahmed-Agha, or, by contraction, *Ahmi*, chief of the Muguru tribe, is decidedly a man endowed with great intelligence, and with an acuteness of mind which has insured him the ascendant over all the other chiefs, and even over the Turkish officials with whom he has come in contact. Knowing well that with the feeble forces which his tribe can muster, it would be ridiculous to rise in rebellion against the authorities of Van, this chief has made it a principle of his policy to coax the Pashas into acquiescence by entertaining them liberally, on condition of

obtaining their assistance when he wished to attack, destroy, and plunder any tribe he chose to make victims of. His skill is such that, though himself always the soul of every dispute, he appears invariably on the scene under the disguise of a mediator and peace-maker.

One or two details about Ahmi will be enough to show with what degree of ability this rough and primitive Koord conducts his policy, and by what elaborate means he endeavours to place beyond the reach of danger the great wealth he owns. Ahmi has conceived the novel idea of having a resident minister plenipotentiary and envoy extraordinary at Van, whose official duty is to watch the movements of the government, to form friendships and alliances, to bribe one side or the other when necessary, and to let his master know whatever may serve his interests. This minister, besides his diplomatic capacities, fulfils the duties of a trustworthy servant of the household. Ahmi has appointed him a trustee and guardian, to take care of all the valuable furniture and costly objects which it would be impossible for him to carry about during his wanderings, or to keep safely at his place of residence. At Van, those objects are out of the reach of the Koordish marauders, his enemies, who might be tempted to make themselves masters of them. As for his treasures in hard cash,

Ahmi seems to have no confidence even in his minister plenipotentiary; alive he is determined not to separate himself from them. The fruits of his plunders and vexations are transformed into precious metal of different coinage, from the English sovereign to the Russian paul, the whole amounting to forty thousand pounds. According to the general belief, Ahmi has divided this bulky sum into three portions, one of which is buried under ground on the spot where he takes rest at night (it is well to notice that Ahmi sleeps armed to the teeth). A second heap of bullion is buried under the fire-place, while the third is concealed in a spot unknown to anyone but himself. A triple combination of ill-luck could alone deprive the careful and vigilant Koord of all he possesses, as a general sweep of his property is next to an impossibility.

It is said of the Kirgizs of Russia that depredations and brigandage are necessary to their existence. The same must be said of the Koords. Brigandage is systematically established throughout Koordistan. It is carried out by two processes,—namely, by means of sudden attacks on caravans, travellers, and other victims, or by the more regular plan of forced contributions. The attacks on caravans can only be avoided by a display of strength, as the Koord attacks with the object of gaining something, not for the sake of killing. He therefore never molests a caravan

or a party of travellers, unless the chances of success are ten to one in his favour. The traveller or merchant who ventures through Koordistan with a small retinue can with difficulty escape being plundered or murdered. Commercial travellers, however, who go on their rounds every year, manage to move about through Koordistan from tribe to tribe with little fear of being hurt. These travellers find security in two ways, — first by getting into favour with the chiefs, whom they propitiate by handing over a certain amount of their profits, and secondly on account of the policy of the Koords, who know that if the travellers were murdered, they would not be able to sell their produce, and could not therefore procure for themselves for the future that money for the sake of which they are tempted to commit murder and brigandage. Of course, the Koord understands as well as anyone what is to his own advantage. He considers, therefore, as good prey anyone from the plunder and murder of whom he has nothing to fear, or to lose, and some profit to gain.

Forced contributions and ransoms belong, as we have said, to the regular form of brigandage employed by the Koords. Whenever a chief is in want of money, or finds that he is running short of provisions, he at once has recourse to a ransom or contribution imposed on the Armenian villages of the neighbourhood. To refuse obedience to his peremptory order is rather

dangerous, as the chief is but too glad to find a pretext to plunder and sack a refractory village. Besides these ransoms and contributions on a large scale, there exists a sort of contribution on a smaller scale, which every Koord thinks himself entitled to impose whenever he thinks it convenient to do so. On the approach of winter a Koord is anxious to get rid of the expense and care which the keeping of two horses or buffaloes requires. How does he set to work? He knocks at the door of one of the Armenian peasants, presents to him his two horses or buffaloes, and requests him to be kind enough to take upon himself the charge of keeping these animals, which he promises to take back on the approach of spring. The poor Armenian raises his shoulders, but takes good care not to refuse the proposal. He is fully aware that, were he to do so, one fine day he should find the whole of his crop reduced to ashes. Amongst the many acts of brigandage of which the Koords make themselves guilty, a peculiar kind of highway robbery must here be stated, which is probably unparalleled. The culprits—the brigands—are in this case young women, who set out on plundering pursuits, in order to turn a dishonest penny. A troop of fair bandits takes up a station at the side of the road, there patiently to wait for the arrival of the doomed traveller. As soon as the *vedettes* announce his approach, the fair troop starts off to meet him, welcoming him with dances

and with fiery glances of irresistible power. He is compelled to stop, as a matter of course, and the fair maids then politely request him to alight from his horse. No sooner has the bewildered victim, unconscious of his fate, put his foot on the ground than he finds himself at close quarters with the whole troop. Immediately he is stripped of all he has on his back, and is left in that primitive state in which Adam was at one time. Then begins a series of dances and fascinating gestures in the style of those performed by the maids at the Lupercalian festival, the object of which is to make the unfortunate traveller lose his self-control. An attempt, however, on the part of the victim to reciprocate the advances of his alluring tyrants becomes instantly fatal, as the troop get hold of him in a summary way, declare him to have made attempts on the virtue of one of the fair maids, and condemn him to be pricked with thorns on a very sensitive part of his person. These dances, and the flagellations which serve as *entr'actes*, are repeated several times over, till the sufferer, exhausted and bleeding, is nearly in a fainting condition. Then the female troop of bandits drags the wretched traveller before a court of matrons, which holds its sittings somewhere in the neighbourhood. There a charge of attempting a criminal assault is brought against the pretended culprit, who not only receives a good dose of upbraiding, but is also con-

demned to pay the fine stipulated by the court. This fact, from the extravagance of the proceedings described, might excite some doubts as to its accuracy. If I have ventured, however, to state it, it is on the strength of the testimony of several individuals who have happened to pass through the territory of the Bilbash tribe, whose women are addicted to this singular kind of highway robbery. With a view to give greater strength to the testimonies above alluded to, I may mention that among them is the statement made to me by one of my colleagues on the staff, Major Daud Effendi, who has resided a long time in the province of Kerkuk, of which the Bilbash tribe is a dependency.

Koordistan is a barren country, where cultivated fields and gardens are only to be found in the proximity of a few towns, and where pasturage is the only resource which furnishes the inhabitants with the means of subsistence. From what source, then, do the tribes provide their food? The nomadic Koord, fortunately for himself, is a being who does not require much to keep body and soul together. The flock provides him with the milk, the butter, the *djadjk* (cheese), which form the principal ingredients of his meals. Women are useful mates in this country, as it is upon them that devolves the duty of manufacturing the butter and the djadjk. Butter is made here by a curious process; the only machine

people use for the purpose being a large bag made of sheepskin, which remains suspended horizontally by two strings. The maidens impart a see-saw movement to the apparatus, and after some time the milk turns into butter. Djadjk too is made by the women. This is a kind of white cheese, which contains some prickly herb, partaking very much of the nature of onions. It is quite a national article of consumption, and is highly thought of by the Koords. An ironical and sarcastic meaning is sometimes attached to it, the word djadjk being used as synonymous with bribery, or *bakhshish*. Whenever an official makes a tour amongst the tribes he is invariably suspected of having indulged in his taste for djadjk. Sour milk and yaurt are also amongst the principal ingredients of the Koordish kitchen.

The gardener lives on the fruits of his garden, the husbandman on those of his field, but the Koord seldom eats the flesh of his flock. Few Koords eat meat more than three or four times during the course of the year. The produce of the flock, its flesh and its wool, are too valuable. They constitute the wealth of the Koord, who is, therefore, extremely parsimonious in using them for the satisfaction of his own appetite. The wealthy chiefs form an exception to the general rule, their table being abundantly provided with the best of meat, prepared in various ways. The wheat necessary for subsistence is bought by the

Koords in the markets of the country, or imported from Persia. After having reduced it to the state of flour by means of the water-mills established throughout the country, the women make with it a very thin paste, wafer-cakes, which are baked within a few minutes inside the *tandur*. Wheat, nicely cleaned, and broken into fragments, is used to make the pilaf, which is called "bulgur-pilaf," to distinguish it from the ordinary pilaf made of rice. This dish forms the principal daily food of the Koords.*

In Koordistan men do literally nothing. The duties of shepherd and watch once fulfilled, the Koords spend their time in gossiping, smoking, and plotting; and when they begin to feel that a more exciting pursuit would do them good, they start on a marauding expedition, or attack one another.

Avaricious as the Koords have been described to be with regard to eating and drinking, one would naturally expect them to be just as miserly in all other respects. Such however is not the case. These people, full of vanity, attach great importance to appearances, and a fanciful costume goes a great way with them. Red morocco boots and a red mantle form the customary outfit of a warrior. Persian and Cashmere shawls are fineries to which every chief aspires. They

* It is well to observe here that windmills are utterly unknown throughout Koordistan; water-mills are therefore the only mechanical contrivance which the people employ for grinding corn.

are used as turbans, or they are twisted round the waist. Silk gowns and other varieties of showy robes are presents which no Koord ever disdains, let it be a Pasha or a Khan who bestows them.

The costumes worn by the men in this part of Koordistan are of three sorts. The first is composed of a kind of morning-gown, and a long-gown, *djupeh*, worn above. This dress, common all through the East, is worn by the Koords in-doors and while *en negligé* under the tent. The second costume consists of a voluminous pair of loose blue trousers, a small gown, the scarlet mantle, together with its lower appendix, the red boots. This is, strictly speaking, a warrior's winter costume. The third is by far the most picturesque of all, and is exclusively Koordish. This dress is composed of a short scarlet jacket with hanging sleeves, and a pair of trousers large and loose, forming a garb the appearance of which it would be difficult to convey to the reader by any description. The usual red boots and the big turban, around which a variety of coloured handkerchiefs are carefully twisted, complete this elegant costume, worn by the warriors during the hot season. Few costumes are more suited to the service of light cavalry than this is; possessing the required qualities of ease, elegance, and martial aspect.

The arms used by the Koords are, as a defensive arm, the shield, made of elephant, rhinoceros, or buffalo

skin. This shield is small, having only a diameter of twenty inches. Externally it is covered with several rows of brass buttons gradually rising in thickness from the circumference to the centre. As offensive arms, they have a short carbine, with a wide, open muzzle of a very old model; an old flint-pistol and a scimitar of Persian manufacture, from Khorasan. Some carry also in the belt a small crooked Persian dagger (hantcher). The best of their arms is the lance, in the handling of which the Koords excel. The Koordish lance is made of bamboo imported from India by Persian merchants. The bamboo having seven knots is considered the best, and its length is four yards and a half. The point is of good steel, and remains almost concealed inside a ball made of long black horse-hair. The object of this ball is to frighten with it the horses of the enemy, and to conceal from him the deadly weapon.

The Koordish race, both men and women, are remarkably handsome, far superior, in this respect, to the Tartar-Turks or to those of Constantinople. They are tall, powerfully-built, and muscular. What is strange in the Koords is, that a variety of complexions is to be found among them, though a dark complexion, with black eyes and black hair, is predominant. Light hair and blue eyes are also to be met with; and chestnut is not uncommon. One peculiar feature of the Koords is the fire and power with which their optic organs

are endowed; there are few things that a Koordish shepherd will not detect at almost any distance. Though I have not visited the independent districts situated in the centre of the Taurus chain, a region known to the Turks under the name of Dersim-dagh, I have ascertained, from the statements made to me by my fellow-officers, that the Koordish race sheltered in that mountainous country may be looked upon as a model of physical beauty and power.

What I can say on this subject from personal experience is, that when I happened to see for the first time groups of Koordish lasses on one side of a spacious tent, their easy and simple bearing, their fine forms and blooming countenances, produced a powerful effect upon me. These women wear large Oriental trousers (*shalvar*) tied at the ankle, a small jacket open in front and reaching below the knees; and on their head the voluminous turban, in the Koordish fashion. This costume, with its gay colours, displays to advantage their full round forms and sun-burnt features.

Koordish women, who are anything but idle, are very firm on the chapter of morals. Their virtue can be put to trial without danger, as, through constant intercourse with men, their character partakes of a manly firmness and decision. This free intercourse between the sexes will be considered rather strange, as the Mussulman religion is at variance with such a custom. The Koords, like the nomadic Arabs, think

little of the harem system which the Prophet has rendered compulsory for every believer; but, even if they were to consider it as one of the first commandments of their creed, the question is how would they manage to comply with such an awkward regulation? They have therefore wisely decided on leaving it on one side, taking no notice of it. Of course this has turned to their advantage, as not only their women are far more virtuous than all those huris and odalisks whom their co-religionists shut up under the care of eunuchs, but they are also more capable than other Mussulman women to take their share in the social and political existence of their race.

A Koordish woman knows everything about her tribe's concerns, feuds, plans, and conspiracies; she is often the very soul and moving spirit of them. The wife of Omer-Agha, chief of the Milans, used to be the adviser, the secretary, the treasurer of her husband. With the boldness of a man she managed and directed the affairs of the tribe. Though only twenty-two at the epoch of her husband's death, she possessed the esteem of the elders of the tribe, and exerted a great influence over them. As enterprising and indefatigable as their men, the Koordish women are always on the alert, ever ready to jump on the saddle. Though not very elegant riders, these ladies keep pace with their husbands during their wanderings. Their

way of riding, as well as the red cloak worn by them, renders them scarcely distinguishable from the male members of the troop.

The part which women play in the politics of their tribe is a peculiarity of nomadic life, and of that primitive state of society of which people living in a civilized world can have but a faint idea. Some instances of this sort of female intrusion in public affairs will not, therefore, be found quite void of interest. After a skirmish that we had with the turbulent Shikiak tribe, the beaten Koords retired to their encampment with a loss of twenty-four of their warriors. As natural, that night the consternation amongst them was very great, some of the most important and renowned of their chiefs having been slain in the engagement. Fearing lest on the following day I should march upon their place of retreat and inflict on them a still greater loss, the Shikiaks despatched in great haste a deputation to Van, imploring the mediation of the civil authorities. The Pasha and the other officials, anxious to put their nose into every affair, listened at once to the entreaties of these people and sent a kind of commission with the object of interfering on their behalf. At a distance of several miles from the Koordish camp the commission was met on the way by a crowd of women, the pretty ones at the head, wearing black veils, shouting and

shrieking as loudly and wofully as it was in their power to do. Of course this solemn display of grief, backed by a present of freshly made *djadjk*, was powerful enough to bring about a solution favourable to the tribe, which was thus permitted to get free from any further punishment through the mediation of the women.

Another case of the sort is the following. The Haideranlis are a large and wealthy tribe established in the plains to the north-west of Van. At the ordinary epoch their camp is visited by a class of guests which is not generally welcome anywhere—I mean the tax-gatherers. The Koords, who are fertile in expedients whenever it is a question of postponing payment, prefer to sneak away from the contest, leaving their women and the tax-gatherer to settle the accounts the best way they can.

An unfortunate tax-gatherer went once to the tents of the Haideranlis to collect the tax on sheep. On his arrival he was treated with black coffee and a still blacker pipe in the tent of Ali-Agha, the chief, who politely told him that for the collection of the tax he was perfectly free to go himself to the different tents, where he could easily settle matters, as he understood it. Once in the tents, the tax-gatherer soon perceived that, while he was striving to get hold of everything he could detect, the object

the women had in view was to conceal from him all they could. Out of interests so utterly opposed, a collision soon ensued. After some altercation a shower of vituperation fell on the head of the tax-gatherer, whose back also was visited with a pelting of sticks and stones. Luckily for him some of Ali-Agha's men rushed to the spot, coming in good time to rescue him from the vengeance of these fair furies.

Once out of danger under the tent of Ali-Agha, the chief did not fail to give the tax-gatherer the friendly advice to get from the women all they were willing to give, and to be off with it to Van, thanking the Almighty that nothing worse had befallen him. "My good fellow, what can you do with women? They will have it all their own way; take the money and be off."

In their ideas, manners, and habits the Koords are a rough and half savage people. Their knowledge and ideas are very limited. They are even destitute of national traditions. Those stories which, related by the old men of the tribes, are inherited by the youth, and handed down from generation to generation, are not their own. Anecdotes about Persian heroes and Shahs constitute their stock of historic traditions. The chiefs and the old men often expatiate on those themes, selecting such subjects in order to make a display of their knowledge of Persian history. It is always some Shah who has

the bowels of his faithful vezir pulled out, or a favourite who has received such a mark of royal benevolence as being nailed to the very spot where he was seated. Such stories as these seem to amuse exceedingly the audience. With regard to Turkish history the Koords do not seem to have ever cared much about it. This fact must be considered as a proof of the moral ascendancy of the Persians over the populations of Koordistan. It is unquestionable that the Koords find themselves much more at home with the Persians than with the Turks.

Buffoonery and jokes of all sorts are very much in favour amongst the Koords, every chief having a buffoon whose duty is to keep the company merry. The Mudir of Kotur had two of these fellows, one a short and queer-looking individual called Mollah Yassin, the other a man of the name of Hadji-Khan, who was clever enough to feign to be an idiot. This Hadji-Khan, though given to boasting, was known to lack courage, so that whenever there was a rumour of war he was the object of everybody's laughter, and his pretended exploits and bravado were made as much a subject of hilarity as the achievements of a Sancho Panza would be by a European circle. Coarseness and vulgarity seem to be innate with the Koord, who seldom succeeds in getting rid of them, even when he assumes the dignified airs of an Agha, a gentleman, or a Pasha.

To do the Koords justice, it must be said, however, that they are often frank enough to avow their faults and shortcomings. They acknowledge themselves to be a wild and rough set, and therefore consider themselves entitled to forbearance. Not unfrequently, on the strength of such an excuse, they take liberties against which, if one happens to remonstrate, they quickly reply, "Don't mind such things; what else can you expect in a country of Koords?" An instance will serve to illustrate the manner in which Koords act on such occasions, as well as how they ought to be dealt with.

When the chiefs used to come and sit around me, one or two of them ventured to speak Koordish in order to conceal some of their tricks. I soon put a stop to this kind of manœuvring, forbidding, in my presence, the use of any other language but Turkish. An attempt to transgress having once or twice occurred, the defaulters were summarily dealt with, being taken by the collar and kicked out of the assembly. A punishment of this sort left no room for excuses or misunderstandings, ignorance and bad breeding not being admitted as a valid plea.

Amusements are not much in vogue with the Koords, the inventive powers of this people being as deficient in this branch as in others. Wrestling, throwing stones, tournaments, dances, and buffalo-fights are the exercises practised by

them. With regard to the tournaments and dances, I propose to treat of them in the proper place. As for the buffalo-fights, they are not in the style of those of Spain, neither do these Koordish fights possess that intense interest which betting gives to cock or rat-fights in England. Here buffalo-fights come on naturally, whenever the fighting parties feel tempted to have a smash at each other. This generally happens towards evening, at the hour when the buffaloes go to cool themselves in the stream. There the rival animals meet, and look at each other with a calm and steady bearing. Then they gradually approach their lowered heads and cross their horns; at last dashing against each other with a fierce onset. This struggle is prolonged for an indefinite period, during which the two antagonists display the whole of their muscular strength, and their skilful manœuvring, with varied success. At intervals one of them loses ground, and is thrown into the stream by its opponent, in the midst of the cheers of the bystanders, who with difficulty succeed in preventing the conqueror from suffocating the vanquished under water. The struggle between the infuriated animals is so deadly that often on separating them the foreheads of both are found covered with blood. The winning buffalo becomes then the object of an ovation, and is carried to its stable by a crowd of admirers, who shout after him.

Of the more sedentary games and entertainments,

chess is the only one which is known to the Koords. Of course this is meant for their khodjas and eminent men. Cards, dominoes, and such other civilized contrivances which serve to make people lose their time agreeably, are entirely ignored by the Koords. Even if they were taught the way to play with such things, it would be difficult to say when and how they could take advantage of them. At nine o'clock p.m. the Koords are in bed;—that is, the want of gas, candles, and even of a decent sort of lamp, compels them to make a virtue of necessity, and forces them to stick with tenacity to the old proverb "Early to bed, early to rise," &c.

CHAPTER XI.

The Armenians—Their Character and Condition—The Jews—Polygamy—Their Trade—The Nestorians—Their Creed—Their Condition—The Yezids—Their Worship—Their Condition—The Kizil-bashes—The Tribe.

THE Armenian nation is so thoroughly known in present, as well as in ancient, times that little new can be said about it. The Armenians belong to that branch of mankind called the Arian race. As such they are kinsmen to the Koords, their neighbours. Which of the two is the aboriginal people, which has a greater right to call the country according to its own name—Armenia or Koordistan—are questions which I leave to more profound ethnologists than myself to settle. It is beyond question, however, that though both races are recorded, from the remotest antiquity, as being natives of this region, the Armenians are those who have benefited the country through their culture and civilization. As for the Koords, they are only known as having trodden down the grass which their flocks left untouched.

Though arts and sciences may have flourished where the Armenians asserted sway, their power never

attained a decisive ascendancy, as they were always compelled to accept the law from the invaders who overran their country at different periods. The cause of this relative weakness of the Armenians is hinted at in one passage of the "Cyropedia,"* in which Xenophon says: "The Armenians, according to their habit, did not withstand the shock." It is thus to the want of a warlike disposition and undaunted courage that must be attributed the fact of the Armenian kingdom having always played a secondary part amongst the nations of the old world, and of its being at last vanquished.

After the Turkish conquest, the Armenians began to emigrate from a country where they had tried to no purpose to build a nationality and a kingdom of their own. Every wind, whether coming from the east, west, north, or south, had always succeeded in blowing down their scaffolding. The Armenian emigration spread then all through Asia Minor, extending itself as far as the Hellespont and the shores of the Mediterranean, where, in the metropolis and in the principal sea-ports, they constantly pour a fresh supply of labourers, servants, merchants, usurers, and bankers. The limits of the Turkish territory were soon found to be too circumscribed to satisfy their mercantile avidity, and they extended their sphere of action to the market-places

* Book iii. chap. ii.

of Egypt and India. If, exiles from their country, the Armenians of the present day regret the loss of the land of their forefathers, and the downfall of their earthly kingdom, the enormous wealth which they have been able to accumulate, and the relatively high degree of civilization and culture which they have attained, may be considered by some as a sort of compensation.

The Armenians who have remained faithful to their *penates* must have formed that class of the population which, attached to the soil, could not follow their more enlightened and more enterprising countrymen in their emigration. To this circumstance is to be attributed, to a certain extent, the fact that the Armenians of Armenia proper are proverbially known as being one of the coarsest people in existence. In Constantinople, and throughout Turkey, the epithet of *Van Ermenisi*, or Armenian for Van, is equivalent for boor, or a clumsy fellow. The *élite* of the nation having taken to emigration, it was but natural that only those who were without means and energy should cling to the ruins of a doomed country. Few families of notoriety are now to be found throughout Armenia; at Erzerum there is said to be some one who claims to be the descendant of royalty. The wealthy of the present day are men who owe their fortunes and influence to their own exertions, and have therefore no high pedigree to boast of.

Having had but little intercourse with the Armenians during my sojourn in Koordistan, I cannot venture to give here anything like a detailed account of their character and manners. However, judging from what I have seen of them, I can say that the qualities which distinguish them from the neighbouring races are a bright intellect, a disposition to work, a great amount of forbearance, and frugal habits. Want of courage, dissimulation, and craft are the vices which the Armenians possess, but such defects are often the consequence of the abject state to which oppressors reduce their victims. Not having the power to oppose themselves to the vexations of the Koords, and to the despotic rule of their masters, the Armenians take their revenge in an underhand way, by trying to outwit their foes by craft and skill. An example will give an insight into this state of things.

Keur Omer, chief of the Shikiaks, using the right of the strong, took a high ransom from an Armenian village. The Armenians, arming themselves with forbearance and dissimulation, patiently awaited for an opportunity to take their revenge. Keur Omer might happen some time after to have business to transact in the market-place. There the Armenian Sheran or Bederos would wait to settle accounts with the tyrant of the field; and there in his turn he succeeded, by clever manœuvres and swindling operations, in making the Koord pay such a ransom that he bitterly regretted

his former rapacity. As for the Turkish officials, the Armenian is a first-rate hand at dealing with them. He begins by becoming the Pasha's private adviser and partner in all his profits. Once admitted into the secrets of the administration, he makes the Pasha his support in all the differences that may arise between himself and the Koords, or anyone else.

It is evident that in the long run the Armenians get the best of it. It is, however, only the wealthy residing in the cities who come out victorious from the strife; as for the peasants they are always the losers in any bargain. Their only safety from the depredations of the Koords lies in clearing out of the country by emigrating to Constantinople or to the Russian frontier.

The course followed by the Turks, whenever a question arises between Armenians and Koords, is a very simple one. The Pasha does not give himself the trouble of looking closely into the details of a suit: he merely examines his administrative barometer, and gives his warrant after having ascertained the financial and political state of the atmosphere. For instance, if the Armenian presents himself at the bar of justice backed by the metallic influence of his chest, or sustained by the political influence of one of the ambassadors residing at Constantinople, in nine cases out of ten he is sure to win the day. If, however, the Pasha discovers that the

political barometer sets to fair, granting him a splendid opportunity to give vent to his religious fanaticism or national predilections, as well as to the thirst of gain, then the Armenian is doomed, and the Koord gets the best of him.

In 1863 an event took place in the province of Mush which well reveals this sort of policy. The Koordish tribes which rove about the fertile plains of Mush attacked several of the Armenian villages, but as the Armenians happened then to be numerous, the invaders met with resistance, and several skirmishes took place, in which both parties suffered and no one gained. The Christians decided, however, on sending a deputation to Erzerum, in order to expose their griefs to the governor. On receiving the deputation the Pasha gets hold of his barometer, and seeing that political considerations were weighing against the Armenians, turns them off. Upon this, hoping to find the prognostics more favourable at Constantinople, the Armenians repair thither, but the Grand Vezir announces to them that, the barometer being in a state just as depressed there as elsewhere, it was of no use for them to seek justice. The Armenians took the hint, and, once back to their homes, decided on emigrating to the Russian provinces of the Caucasus in search of a more congenial climate, where the barometer of justice might show fair instead of storm.

The oppression under which the Armenians labour results in keeping alive amongst them the sentiment of nationality. In these parts they are narrow-minded, and bear a hatred against all other creeds. Their dislike for, or rather hostile feeling against, those whom they look upon as sectarians and infidels is universally spread and powerful. It is on this account that the Protestant missions established at Betlis and Urmieh, in order to convert them, have scarcely produced any effect upon the Armenians of Koordistan. They look upon this kind of proselytism as a dodge of the Franks, and therefore cling to their church with greater fervour and pertinacity.

On the point of education their national schools are on a very satisfactory footing, as the Armenian youth, during the last twenty or thirty years, have been able to acquire under the tutorship of the clergy the rudiments of literature, history, and mathematics. In this respect the Armenians are far ahead of their Mussulman countrymen.

The clergy, into whose hands is confided the care of public instruction, serve likewise as a medium to keep up the idea of separate national existence. Of late years great progress has been made by the youth of Armenia in that way, and the belief in the future prospects of their nationality is become a creed. Newspapers, pamphlets,

and engravings are printed in the monastery of Yedi-kilissieh, two hours from Van, and thence are spread in all directions. On my visit to the monastery I remarked a large engraving hanging on one of the walls in the class-room. It represented St. Vartan, king, hero, and saint, whose portentous deeds are recorded in Armenian history. Vartan was seen in the engraving wearing the helmet and armour of the Roman epoch. The helmet was ornamented with the ram's head, which constitutes the blazon of Armenian royalty. A series of little prints skirting St. Vartan's portrait represented the exploits achieved by him on the field of battle.

Many concealed and mysterious wires are constantly busily at work to keep up the communications between the divided members of the Armenian nationality both in the Turkish and the Russian dominions. A system of wandering ecclesiastical emissaries serves to unite the numerous convents and religious institutions scattered over Armenia and Georgia, while bands of pilgrims go to and fro displaying national banners and emblems, and visiting the most renowned shrines and churches. Notwithstanding these praiseworthy efforts of the Armenians to maintain their rights as a nation, if we are to judge from the present state of the world we cannot help thinking that Armenian nationality has as little chance of self-existence as any of the other unacknowledged nationalities.

In the province of Van every trace of civilization and culture is due to the Armenians, without whom the garden of Eden would be turned into a wilderness. The tillage of the soil is in a great measure carried on by the labour of the Armenian peasant, and it is he who cultivates the delicious gardens which cover the plain of Van, and the valleys and creeks situated along the shores of the lake. The little industry and commerce to which the natives are addicted is almost entirely the monopoly of the self-exerting Armenian. It is he who erects and constructs everything in the shape of houses, buildings, walls, &c. The blacksmiths, silversmiths, saddlers, tailors, shoemakers, and all the other operatives, are also exclusively of the Armenian race; and to this nation, too, belong almost all the shopkeepers in the market and khans of Van, from the small dealer in manufactures up to the wealthy and bulky *saraf*—banker. A peculiar fact, which ought not to be passed unnoticed, is that often the Armenian tradesman or merchant is only an active partner, the capital which he employs belonging to a sleeping one—some rich Mussulman who goes in with him half-and-half for the profits. The fishery on the lake, as well as the little navigation which is seen upon it, are carried on through Armenian enterprise.

At Bash-kaleh, the chief town of the province of Hakkiari, there exists a small community of the Jewish persuasion, mustering something like two thousand souls. Jews, while preserving their peculiar features, are apt to adopt almost everywhere the manners and customs of the country they reside in; and in Koordistan no peculiarity distinguishes them from the other races. The small Jewish population established here is a sort of branch establishment of a larger community which resides at Selmas, in Persia. These Jews carry on a retail trade with the Koords, visiting them in their villages, running after them during their nomadic excursions in summer time, and exchanging manufactured Persian and European goods for wool, carpets, butter, skins, &c.

With regard to the customs of the Jews established in this part of the world, two peculiarities exist worth noticing. The first is that they do not mind giving their daughters to Turks. Few are the battalions that happen to be garrisoned here, the officers and men of which do not take some pretty Jewish girl to wife. It is odd that the same mark of favour is not granted to Christians. It is to be supposed that the religious scruples which might arise on the subject of a matrimonial alliance with a Mussulman, are overlooked in consideration of the affinity existing between the law of Moses and that of Mohammed.

The other peculiarity is also a faithful application of the Mosaic law with regard to polygamy. The Jews here, unlike their co-religionists in Europe, do not think that many wives are a bore. As Moses allows them such a practice, why not take advantage of it, and do as people in the East are in the habit of doing? These Jews are thus more addicted to biblical customs and ways, and do not object to a plurality of wives.

If the Koords and the Armenians both bring forward claims to be acknowledged as the old settlers of this country, there is another race which, though of foreign extraction, is known to have been established here for the last twenty-four centuries. This race is that of the Nestorians, whose ancestors were known to antiquity under their genuine name of Chaldeans. In the Cyropedia* Xenophon relates the expedition of Cyrus, together with his ally the king of Armenia, against this people. At that epoch the Chaldeans occupied the Hakkiari mountains, which served to them as a stronghold, for Xenophon puts into the mouth of Cyrus the following words: "My friends, those mountains which you see belong to the Chaldeans."

The territory of the Nestorians of our day is limited to the eastern portion of the Hakkiari chain.

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* Book iii. chap. ii.

That formerly, too, they occupied the same territory is proved by the fact that the same Greek writer, when describing the retreat of the ten thousand, does not make any mention of the Chaldeans, or of their territory. As the ten thousand were opening an outlet for their march through the western extremity of the Hakkiari chain, the territory of the Chaldeans was distant four marches from the flank of the column. If their territory had been close to the route followed by the retreating army, a collision between Xenophon's troops and the Chaldeans would have been inevitable. All that Xenophon says about this people in the "Cyropedia" shows that he was well informed with respect to their country and their condition. It would, however, have been useless for him to trouble himself about them while effecting his retreat, as the question of life and death for his army was that of reaching the shores of the Euxine without a moment's loss of time.

I am not aware whether ethnologists and philologists agree in allowing that the Nestorians are of the Chaldean race. What I can ascertain on that point is that the Nestorians themselves hold the belief that they are derived from the Chaldeans. Talking one day on this subject with an old man, the priest of the village of Aghaza-tchai, he told me that their race was originally from Chaldea, that is to say, the low country of Mesopotamia. Their ancestors, he said,

had emigrated to the high lands of Hakkiari at a very remote period, in order to escape from the oppression of some conquering race. At my request, the old priest sent his son to fetch the Bible of the village, a huge book of dirty appearance, which had evidently several centuries on its back. The parchment leaves were covered with a nice and regular writing, which might easily be mistaken for Jewish characters. The priest, however, told me that it was written in Chaldean.

The name of Nestorians, which is commonly given to this people, is an appropriate name to express their religious tenets as followers of Nestorius, but not their nationality. Whether right or wrong, it is by the name of Nestorians exclusively that they are known to the nations of Europe, while the Turks and other Orientals call them Nassranis. This proper name, however, presents also an oddity, something like that of Nestorians. The words Nassrani and Nassarah mean, in Arabic, a Christian, who is a follower of Jesus of Nazareth, a generic name for all Christians. How is it then that the name Nassrani should be exclusively employed to define this branch of the Christian family? This must evidently be attributed to the more or less identity of sound which exists between the two names of Nassrani and Nestorian. The Orientals, who do not care much to call things by their proper name, have

readily given the name of Nassrani to those whom the other Christian nations call Nestorians.

The language of these Nestorians has very much the sound of the Arabic idiom; nay it is so full of Arabic words that it looks almost like a dialect of that language.

The Nestorians amount to 200,000 souls, scattered all throughout Koordistan. The population which dwells in the Hakkiari mountains is not above 60,000. They enjoy an administration of their own, which represents a sort of theocratic government under the presidency of a high priest called the Mar-Shumun, or Mar-Simon, whose authority is hereditary in one family. A hierarchical body of priests known to the people under the names of *Kieshishès* and *Abunas*, is at the head of the tribes and villages, entrusted with both spiritual and temporal power. The Kieshishes and the Abunas are married, and their dignity is hereditary in their families, as is that of their patriarch the Mar-Shumun.

The Mar-Shumun is invested in the eyes of the people with the most sacred character, his person being considered almost divine. He is reputed to be a descendant of Jesus Christ. The birth of him who is expected to become one day a Mar-Shumun is a mystery which excites the veneration of the faithful, and which entails on their part great care and many precautions. As soon as the mother of the future Mar-

Shumun gets in the family-way she is shut up in a holy recess, where she is made to pass her time up to the period of her delivery in fastings and prayers. Her diet consists of radishes, carrots, and herbs. The residence of the Mar-Shumun is at a place called Khosh-kanné, not far from Djulamerik, in one of the most mountainous districts of the Hakkiari chain. To get access to His Holiness is as difficult an affair as that of climbing the tops of the Alpine ridges. It is reported that some of our adventurous countrymen, moved by the religious zeal which delights in hunting up the followers of Christ, wherever they may be, undertook the perilous journey to Khosh-kanné. One is said to have been successful in his undertaking, while several others, frightened by the precipices and other obstacles which they had to overcome, turned back the head of their steeds, and adopted the more prudent plan of going no further. Is it not strange that Koords, even, should have their stories respecting *les Anglais?*

Unlike the Armenians, the Nestorians of Hakkiari are a very warlike people, especially in mountain warfare. In former times they used to be the rivals of the Armenians, whom they bullied, continually attacking their villages, and carrying off their crops. Now they have left that business entirely to the Koords, who, masters of the plain, deal with the Armenians as they choose. In the mountains, how-

ever, the Koords must be on their guard, as the Nestorians will not allow any such tricks. Armed with their muskets, and protected by the strength of the mountain passes, they are ready to withstand a host of enemies. In 1847 it required a crusade of the whole of Koordistan, under the leadership of Bedir-khan Bey, in order to overcome their resistance. The Mussulmans say that nearly eighteen thousand of these poor fellows were slaughtered by the bloodthirsty conquerors.

The care of the flocks, and a little tillage, are the means by which the Nestorians provide for their livelihood. The productions of their fields consist of wheat, barley, and tobacco. The sterility of the mountainous region in which they live is the cause that the Nestorians are a poor people, who toil through life for the sake of a scanty subsistence. Their poverty being well known by the Pashas of Van, the Treasury follows a policy of leniency towards them, as it is with difficulty that they can pay their taxes. The Ottoman Government treats the Mar-Shumun with due deference, and the Sultan has granted him the Order of the Medjidieh as a token of his Imperial favour.

A race exists in Koordistan, and in some parts of Persia, the position of which it is difficult to define, whether it constitutes really a distinct race or people, or is an agglomeration of several races, united by the tie of religious belief. This race is known

under the name of Yezids, an appellation which is employed by the Mussulmans as an opprobrious nickname, fit to stigmatize any scamp or bad character. The reason of the contempt and hatred of which the Yezids are the object, is that they have taken it into their heads to worship the devil instead of the true God.

Religion being in the East synonymous with nationality, it so happens that, as all the worshippers of the Allah of Mohammed are gathered around a common centre, and form one people and one nation, so the worshippers of the devil, bound to one central belief, have formed a distinct nationality of their own. The faith of the Yezids is based on the doctrine of Zoroaster, which admits that worship can rest either on the principle of good or on that of evil. In our present epoch, in which science is applied to everything, we might style this doctrine that of positive and negative worship. These men believe that Satan or Lucifer is the Angel of Evil, whom it is necessary for mortals to propitiate in order to avoid sin. God is good and merciful; what is the use, they say, of praying to him. As he is not capable of injuring any one, let us then pray to the devil, and through his medium many evils will be avoided.

There are several names or attributes by which the Yezids designate their divinity. He is called Sheitan or Satan, Melek-el-kut and Melek-tauss: these two sig-

nifying the Angel Peacock. According to their belief Melek-el-kut rose in rebellion against God, was vanquished and thrown into hell. Up to this point the creed of the Yezids is in perfect harmony with that of the Old Testament. The Yezidish doctrine, however, deviates from that of our Bible in asserting that, though Melek-el-kut was vanquished by the Almighty, the strife between the two is continually going on with varied success. From this the Yezids infer that, as in the long run it is doubtful whether God or Sheitan, Satan, will get the upper hand, logically they must endeavour to conciliate the latter, lest, once a conqueror, he should make them experience the effects of his wrath.

A circumstance worth noticing in connexion with the faith of the Yezids is the name of Melek-tauss or the Angel Peacock given by them to Satan. To consider the peacock as a symbol of Satan or Lucifer may seem extraordinary, but this fact will be explained when we remember the legends which exist amongst all nations about Lucifer and the peacock.

Lucifer is said to have been the Angel of Pride, who, elated by his beauty and strength, despised the power of the Almighty and fell, prostrated by his vengeance. As a legend of this sort had been circulated with respect to the winged angels of heaven, a parallel to it was naturally to be set up with regard to the winged animals of the earth. The parallel to

Lucifer, the handsomest amongst angels, was found amongst the birds to be the peacock, who, proud of his plumage, shrieks wildly whenever he happens to look down at his ugly feet. It is to this striking similarity between proud Lucifer and the proud peacock that we must look for an explanation of the fact that the Yezidish worship has adopted the image of the peacock, made of brass, as the symbol of its divinity. The priests or shekhs of the Yezids carry always with them one of these brazen cocks, which they show to their flock, and with which they give them the benediction. In the high temple of Sheik-Adaï lots of these idol-cocks are exposed to the worship of the faithful, and lamps of stinking oil are kept day and night burning before them.

Such is the fear that the Yezids have of the devil that they never profane his name. If anyone either for amusement or unconsciously were to mention it disrespectfully, these superstitious fellows would at once cast at him such devilish looks as to make him repent of his blunder. Blue is a colour detested by the Yezids likewise on grounds of superstition. They never wear it, as it represents the hue of the sky; and Sheitan's *amour-propre* cannot but be touched by the sight of a colour which must bring to his mind unpleasant souvenirs. When a Yezid dies his body is wrapped up in linen of any other colour, but never in blue. The greatest imprecation that the Yezids can

utter against each other is, "that they may die in blue garments."

The religious practices of the Yezids consist of prayers, which they make every day, turning their faces in the direction of the high temple of Sheik-Adaï, which is to them what the shrine of Mecca is to the Mussulman. They have also their fasts, which are kept at three different epochs in the course of the year.

One grand night is consecrated to the worship of the King of Hell. On that occasion men and women, old men and children, everyone, in a word, gather around a hole, the depth of which has never been measured, and which is believed to be in communication with the infernal regions. At midnight they all get hold of lighted torches and begin a wild dance around this hole, into which live sheep, dresses, arms, and pieces of coins are thrown as offerings to the infernal divinity. The dance goes on for several hours, at the end of which the dancers attain such a state of excitement and frenzy that they throw themselves promiscuously into a dark, subterranean recess, where they are said to celebrate dissolute rites.

The Yezids are organized on the tribe system, have their Shekhs, and obey the supreme power of Hussein Bey. The place of residence of this chief is Akra, a town situated not far from Mussul. Hussein Bey is an hereditary prince, under whom a lot of Shekhs divide

amongst themselves the care of governing the different tribes formed by their followers.

These Shekhs constitute a powerful aristocracy, imbued with principles so proud and exclusive that a morganatic alliance with a plebeian is considered a capital crime. As proud as it becomes a true follower of Lucifer to be, the Yezid, who can boast of thirty or more quarters of nobility, will never condescend to marry anyone who has not got the same amount.

Does not this fact give a pitiful *tableau* of the follies, puerilities, and vanities of human kind? What can a philosopher say of his species when he finds that at the extremes of the globe the believers in Lucifer, and the believers in the true God, blindly obey the same passions, labour under the influence of the same illusions, and are as much fools on one side as they are on the other? As the devil-worshipper puts his pride in thirty quarters of nobility, so does the worshipper of one God eagerly seek after them. Of the two, however, which is the less to be blamed? Surely it is the Yezid, because his pride is not in opposition with the creed of proud Lucifer; but what can the follower of the meek and merciful God say, the basis of whose creed is simplicity and humbleness of heart? To such a question let theologians answer, for I will on this subject hold my tongue.

The separation between castes is thus complete, the Shekhs and their families being born to command and

officiate for the devil, while the plebeians must obey, work, and worship idol-cocks.

As a race the Yezids are very handsome men. They are excellent horsemen, and fight like devils. In this respect they are preferable to the Koords, and to all the other races established in the country. I had once an escort of about twenty Yezid horsemen, handsome and first-rate fellows. They volunteered to rove about the country with me, and during the whole of our trip nobody could have behaved better, or have shown themselves more polite and obliging than they did. Of course I took great care not to mention the name of the Old Gentleman, otherwise they might have left me in the lurch.

The Yezids being a Koordish race, the idiom they use is naturally the Koordish. Their warlike propensities ought to be an incitement to great numbers of them to enter the ranks of the Sultan's army. Nothing of the sort takes place. On the contrary, they endeavour to elude conscription by all possible means. With the object of escaping from military service, some years ago the Yezids applied to Constantinople, claiming their right to immunity from conscription. The ground on which they founded their claim was this. They said that as the Christians are excluded from the army because of their dissenting from the Mussulman faith, so they who dissented from every other creed had a right to demand the recognition of

their separate nationality, and ought therefore to be exempted from serving the cause of Mohammed. This theological problem was not taken into consideration by the Porte, and the Yezids were subjected to conscription in spite of the very devil himself.

A mysterious sort of people is said to exist throughout Koordistan and Asia Minor. Of all those who talk about them, no one has actually seen them, yet there is scarcely anyone in Turkey who has not heard something about the Kizil-bashes. Kizil-bashes is a nickname, which, literally translated, signifies Red-heads. As the epithet of Yezid is employed by the Turks as a synonym of scamp, so that of Kizil-bash is applied to men of profligate habits. The Kizil-bashes do not constitute a race; they are a mere sect, which is said to exist in many parts of Asiatic Turkey, concealed under the veil of mystery, something in the style of the Carbonari. The tenets, customs, and object of this sect are unknown to outsiders; one must be admitted into it to know what they are. These dissenters ostensibly declare themselves to be Mussulmans, but inwardly they are said to bear allegiance to some other unknown prophet.

It is supposed that the worship of the Kizil-bashes consists in the performance of obscene actions, and that their belief is that out of the offspring of the promiscuous intercourse of both sexes will one day spring the Mehtih-ressul, the Messiah, the last of the prophets.

It is an essential part of the Kizil-bash worship, in their nocturnal meetings, to put out the candles, so as to afford to the members of the congregation the protection of darkness and the advantage of mystery. On the point of marriage their canons are placed on a very wide basis, which goes far beyond the natural law. A Kizil-bash can marry any one he chooses, even his grandmother if he feels inclined.

After having given a more or less detailed account of the different races and sects which are to be found throughout Koordistan, my narrative would be incomplete if I did not say here something on the tribe, considered as a social and political body. The tribe system is the primitive state of society, and the first step towards the agglomeration of nations. The tribe may be defined as the intermediate degree in the social scale between the family and the nation. When a family extends itself beyond the limits of consanguinity, embracing a relatively wider sphere, it is naturally transformed into a tribe. The ties of affection and habit which cement union between the members of the same family get weakened with the extension of the family circle, and are then replaced by the ties of tradition, of worship, and of common interests. Thus the numerous members of the widely-spread family form a mass which receives the denomination of tribe.

What were the tribes of Israel in olden times, if

not large families which had been transformed into tribes, and were progressing towards their transformation into a nation? Nowhere can one find in our days a more perfect image of the tribes of old than that which is offered by those of Arabia, Mesopotamia, and Koordistan. On entering into their camps, on seeing their tents, on approaching their chiefs and families, it is impossible not to meet at every step and in every object with reminiscences of the Biblical period. That white-bearded, grave-looking chief, who sits inside the tent surrounded by his children, relations, and attendants, might be identified in our imagination with Abraham, Jacob, or any other of the patriarchs? Those four or five women who can be perceived, some sitting, some standing, in one corner of the tent, do they not represent a living *tableau* of what Rebecca, Sarah, or Rachel must have been in the bloom of primitive beauty?

The tribes of Koordistan are formed of a principal family, the family of the chief, and of a series of other families more or less closely connected with it. Every family constitutes a *hampa*—tent, so that the statistical computation of a tribe is reckoned according to the number of tents of which it is composed. Such a tribe is said to be composed of a thousand tents—an expression which is equivalent to a thousand houses. It must be remarked, however, that the tribes of

Koordistan are formed of two distinct elements—one permanent, the other fluctuating. The permanent element consists of the stock of families which are connected with the chief, while the fluctuating element consists of a lot of adventurers and deserters who attach themselves sometimes to one tribe, sometimes to another.

From this state of things results the impossibility of ascertaining exactly the number of a tribe, as its relative strength depends on the turn of affairs at the moment. For instance, the Milan tribe, when prosperous under the leadership of Omer, mustered one thousand six hundred tents. After two years of disasters, the same tribe was reduced to five hundred tents only. All the others melted away with the apparition of ill-luck.

The chief of the tribe is a magnified paternal despot. His authority has no limits; he can dispose of the property of anyone as he chooses; he can apply the bastinado, and have anyone of his subjects murdered if he thinks proper. An extradition treaty, which in time of peace binds the chiefs to each other, prevents a subject escaping the authority of his chief by desertion. Nor does the Government offer any shelter against the abuses of which a chief can make himself guilty, as the policy followed by the Turks is to let the chiefs do what they like, provided they pay something to the exchequer.

The succession to the supreme power takes place by right of seniority. At the death of the chief, the eldest amongst his nearest relations is recognised as his successor, and every one submits to his authority. Usurpations by force or treachery, nominations by universal suffrage, are exceptional circumstances which change the regular course of events here as well as in other parts of the globe.

The tent of the chief is always seen conspicuous in the midst of the rows of smaller tents which are pitched around it. This tent is the place of public meetings, the spot to which all strangers repair in order to find hospitality; it is the high bench of justice or injustice according to exigencies; it is the House of Commons and the House of Lords, where are discussed the great questions of the day. There the chief is visible to anyone, converses and laughs with all, or rebukes those who may have brought on themselves his wrath. His table is always well provided with little hills of pilaf and heaps of roast mutton; anyone can kneel before it and take his share of the repast. The Koords related to me that at the table of Ali Agha, chief of the mighty tribe of the Haideranlis, the little hills of pilaf and roast mutton attained the proportion of high mountains, which were carried on the shoulders of four servants. I have never had an opportunity of seeing this display of barbarous prodigality, as

the chiefs and tribes with whom I had to deal were pigmies when compared with the bigger ones.

Though the authority of the chief is supreme, a certain control is exerted over him by the elders of the tribe, whose voices have a material weight, which cannot always be overlooked. The council of the white-bearded ones — *Ak-sakali*, the name given to the elders—is collected almost every night in the tent of the chief to discuss questions of common interest, as well as any matters which may arise with respect to the daily concerns of the tribe.

CHAPTER XII.

Departure for Kotur — Khosh-guiedighi — Hansal-kaleh — Lake Ertjek—Extraordinary Act of Robbery—Ertjek—Mehemetik—Mollah—Hassan—Camp of Ahmi—His Reception.

TWO roads lead from Van to Kotur and the Persian frontier. One of these follows a due easterly direction, crossing the Varak igneous rocks and the plain of Tchöl-tchemen, and joins the main road in the valley of Kotur. The other, or main road, deviates to the north-east, skirts the lake of Ertjek, and, ascending its tributary streams, arrives at the Kotur valley. Of these two roads the second offers the easier access to caravans, and is therefore preferred by travellers.

On leaving the plain of Van, the road ascends a steep rocky hill and goes through a narrow pass, named by the natives Khosh-guiedighi, on account of the fine view of the lake and plain of Van which the traveller can enjoy from this point. This ascent is the only obstacle of any magnitude to be met with on the road to Kotur. Its steepness, however, is such as to prevent the native carts from following this road, and it compels them to descend into the plain by making a circuit round the hills. On arriving at the

summit, the road emerges from the pass and crosses an elevated plateau, two miles in length, at the extremity of which stand the ruins of an ancient castle called Hansal-kaleh.

This castle belongs to the early period of the Armenian kingdom, and is now entirely destroyed. The only parts which remain of it are its foundations, made of square stones of an enormous size, which form a circle of about one hundred metres in diameter. This castle was evidently built for the purpose of protecting the mountain pass which leads to Van, and with the object of commanding the adjacent valley leading to the lake of Ertjek. Some more modern ruins which stand at the foot of the castle, show that a settlement of some sort had been attempted on this spot to no advantage. A deliciously cold spring runs by the side of the road, and pours its waters into a large tank.

On descending from the plateau our party entered a valley, the north-eastern extremity of which is watered by the lake of Ertjek. For two or three miles the road crosses a series of fields and plantations, the property of the Armenian village, which is to be seen on the heights bordering the valley on its northern side. To the south-east this valley is domineered by the prolongation of the igneous rocks of the Varak. At a distance of three miles from Hansal-kaleh all traces of cultivation disappear, the centre of the valley

being covered by marshes and by thick masses of weed. These marshes stretch for several miles along the valley, and almost come in contact with the south-eastern extremity of the lake.

Projects are a very abundant article in Turkey, though their execution is left to the eve of the world's end. Koordistan is not an exception to the general rule, here, too, projects of all sorts constantly circulate through the mouths of the idle mass of Turkish administrators. The project of opening an outlet to the waters of Lake Ertjek is one amongst the thousand and one projects. The low, marshy ground which brings one extremity of the lake within a short distance of Hansal-kaleh seems to have suggested the conception of this scheme. The obstacles to the execution of the project in question are several, the least of which is that the nature of the water of Lake Ertjek is so destructive and poisonous to agriculture that by its finding an outlet into the plain of Van it would lay waste a considerable portion of productive land.

After two hours' march from Hansal-kaleh the traveller reaches the shores of the lake, and obtains an unlimited view of the mass of its waters, and of the mountains and hills which rise above their surface. The Lake of Ertjek extends over a surface whose circumference, of an oval shape, is twelve miles in length from one axis to the other: its direction is

from north to south. The waters of this lake are supplied by subterranean springs, and by the masses poured in by its tributary streams. That at the bottom of the lake mineral springs do exist is inferred from the fact that its waters contain carbonate of soda and arsenic in large proportions. Carbonate of soda exists likewise in the waters of Lake Van, but a strong mixture of arsenic predominates in the chemical composition of the waters of Lake Ertjek. The taste is something disgusting, and it may easily be conceived that no kind of fish can live in such an element. Here, too, the inhabitants of the villages situated in the proximity of the lake extract by the process of evaporation potassium, which is called by them *perek*, and is employed for washing purposes.

The peasantry here complain of the constant encroachments of the lake over their fields. They pretend that the level of the waters is gradually rising, and that, if it goes on at such a rate, one fine day they will see a repetition of the Deluge. The air in the neighbourhood of the lake is not particularly unhealthy, as otherwise the inhabitants would not enjoy such favourable hygienic conditions. However, the effects of the waters of the lake on the adjacent fields are most destructive. If once they submerge a tract of land, there is no more hope that any vegetation will ever spring out of it again. Except one or two small skiffs,

there is no other means of navigation to be found on this lake.

The tributaries of Lake Ertjek are not more than five or six in number, none of them above the standard of a small stream. All around the circumference of the lake the country is very thinly peopled, we may say it is almost deserted. Two villages, Ertjek and Karagunduz, are situated on the eastern shore, while three other small villages appear on the sides of the high ridges which separate the basin of Lake Ertjek from that of Lake Van. A defile exists amongst these mountains, which offers an outlet towards the latter lake. According to the information which I picked up from the peasants of Ertjek, when, at the epoch of the rainy season, there is a rise in the level of the waters, they find an outlet at that point. Lake Ertjek stands at an elevation of 400 feet from the level of Lake Van.

Ten days previous to my passage through this locality, the shores of the lake were the theatre of an extraordinary act of robbery, the narrative of which cannot fail to interest the reader. Robberies of all kinds are events of daily occurrence, it is true, but a robbery so boldly executed as the one I am going to relate has a peculiar interest, and is therefore worthy of record.

A band of Turkoman robbers, all of them Russian subjects, had come from Karabagh to Erzerum in search of booty. While lurking in the suburbs of that

town, they got intelligence that a wealthy Armenian was on the eve of starting for Van. The robbers, or, to be more exact in the selection of my expressions, the knight-errants, started off at once on their expedition to capture the wealthy Armenian. This band, it must be said, mustered seventeen first-rate desperadoes, armed to the teeth, and mounted every one of them on as good a steed as it would have been possible to find throughout the whole country.

The chief of this band was a man much above his low condition. The Pasha of Van told me that he had never met in his life with such a marvellous individual. Handsome, and of Herculean stature, he knew, though fierce in his looks, how to blend with his ferocity that polished manner and those charms which would make a man the lion of a London season. To these qualities he joined a diplomatic demeanour and skill, together with the knowledge of four or five languages, Persian, Russian, Turkish, and Koordish. The sequel of this adventure will show that all these details about this chief are not altogether superfluous.

One day after the departure of the Armenian banker, the robbers left Erzerum secretly and began their pursuit, calculating upon overtaking their prey before he could reach the Araxes. Fortunately for the Armenian, however, some one of his friends got intelligence of the scheme of the robbers, and in all haste came to reveal to him the danger which was impending. On

receiving this astounding news the terror-struck banker took refuge in a village where no one would suspect his presence, and there burrowed for at least a fortnight.

The robbers soon came up to the different halting places where the Armenian was supposed to have stopped, but all their researches were in vain, as their prey seemed to have fled beyond their reach. All their efforts having turned out useless, the band gave up the game as lost, and after having lurked about the country during one or two days, directed their course towards Van, with the view of reaching the frontier on that side.

At a short distance from Van the robbers met with some peasants who were driving their carts to market. More for amusement's sake, very likely, than for anything else, the chief and his bandits began to bully and frighten the carters; applying several lashes to some of them, and robbing them of the little money which they happened to find upon them. The poor peasants, exasperated by the ill-treatment they received, on arriving in town denounced the band to the authorities and asked for satisfaction.

The Pasha immediately despatched his police, enjoining them to seize the culprits and to bring them to his presence. The robbers in the meantime had quietly made their entry into town, just as if they had been the most straightforward and honest travellers

that had ever alighted at the place, and with coolness and pluck put up at one of the khans. They had not, however, been long established in their new quarters, when in stepped the agents of public authority and summoned the gentlemen to go together before the Pasha.

The chief of the band, on seeing the police at his door, and on receiving the summons, assumed, in a masterly style, an air of calm indignation and astonishment, and declared that the proceeding of which the police were guilty was inexplicable, as it would have been quite sufficient for his Excellency the Pasha to have despatched a message to him, and he would have at once hastened to offer him his respects. Besides, he observed, his quality of a Russian subject was a point on which the Pasha ought seriously to meditate, so as to avoid any political complication. The bold countenance thus shown by the chief of the band, united with the effect produced by his imposing exterior and manners, had due influence. The police at once lowered their former tone, began to make excuses for their inconsiderate conduct, and requested the distinguished foreigner to be kind enough to comply with the Pasha's desire, and to call at his residence whenever it might suit him.

The brigand chief, accompanied by three or four of his men, presented himself accordingly to the Pasha, who, having been informed of the mistake which had unfortunately taken place, renewed, like his police agents,

the assurances of his deepest sorrow for the unhappy occurrence, and requested the brigand not to take any further notice of it. The engaging and distinguished manners of this fellow captivated the Pasha to such a point, that, having no more any doubt about his being a person of note in the Russian empire, the poor man treated him with pipes, coffee, and sherbet, and entered into a long and familiar conversation with him.

The visit once over, the plaintiffs were turned out, no more of their case was heard, and the chief brigand returned to his lodgings, where his inconceivable success must have astonished the whole of the gang. Prudence, however, did not allow them to rest any protracted time on their laurels, and accordingly, soon after, they left Van, taking the road which leads to Ertjek and Kotur.

By a strange coincidence, that very day I had been despatching a convoy with a supply of provisions and clothing for my troops, the whole having been put under the command of one of the commissariat officers, a certain Ismail-Agha. While bordering the shores of Lake Ertjek they were suddenly overtaken by the brigands, of whom a body fell on the convoy and the escort, while the others seized the officer and his attendants. Ismail was himself a great thief, and, taking advantage of his position on the commissariat, had known how to fill his pockets properly. The

robbers now served him right, as they took upon themselves the task of lightening him of his superfluous weight. They found upon him some five hundred pounds in specie, gold watch and gold chain, and a fine brilliant on his finger, all of which they relieved him of.

Without neglecting to take from the soldiers and the convoy the little money they could find, the brigands seized the officer and all his men, about fourteen persons, tied their hands and feet, and prostrated them on the beach with the tips of their noses in the water. Then the chief galloped away, leaving his prisoners in charge of five of his men, with orders to butcher on the spot anyone who should dare to stir. The poor fellows remained in that uncomfortable position for two or three hours, no one daring to turn round, lest the brigands should make short work of them. At last some peasants came to their rescue, untied their hands and feet, and brought them half dead to the village of Ertjek. The brigands, of course, went off, soon crossed the frontier, and neither the Pasha nor anyone else has ever heard anything more about them.

The village of Ertjek is situated at three or four hundred yards distance from the lake. It is the point where the three roads, leading to Van, to Erivan, and to Kotur, meet. In winter this village is the place of shelter where the caravans take refuge when they are overtaken by one of those storms which are not of

uncommon occurrence on the plains of Serai and of Tchöl-Tchemen. The distance between Ertjek and Van is six hours' journey. Ertjek does not count more than fifty houses, its inhabitants are Armenians, and their means of existence consist of the produce of their fields, which is wheat and barley straw. The milk of their buffaloes also helps them to sustain life. Their proximity to the Koordish tribes is a circumstance which prevents them from getting very fat by the produce of their fields.

After having rested the night at Ertjek, on the following morning I continued my route in the direction of Serai. At first the road passes along a valley in the centre of which runs one of the tributary streams of the lake. The mountains on the left conceal in their ravines several villages, like Espistan, Mendan, &c. On the northern side of this ridge is the village of Aghaza-tchai, where, some time afterwards, I dug out a quantity of very good coal. This village is composed of eight or ten Nestorian families.

The name of the valley through which I was passing is worth knowing, this locality being considered by travellers almost as dangerous as Scylla and Charybdis. Mehemetick-boghazi is the name given to it. Its renown is due to a chilly breeze which constantly blows from east to west. The penetrating power of this wind is such that, even in summer time, it almost pierces the body, producing the same sensa-

tion as if a lot of needles were applied to the traveller's skin. The hardiest have often their eyes full of tears. In winter the traveller is compelled to come down from his horse, and walk the whole length of the valley, a distance of two hours.

On emerging from the valley of Mehemetick, my small caravan came within sight of Mollah-hassan, a Koordish village, which stands to the right of the road. The site of this village is highly picturesque, and has some value from a military point of view. Built at the foot of an elevation, very much in the shape of a sugar-loaf, it has a clear view of the three valleys, which, from east, west, and south, join at this point. On the top of the hill there is a fine turfy meadow watered by a spring of good water. This spot is not domineered by any of the heights situated in its proximity. On reaching Mollah-hassan we found the place deserted, as the Muguru-koords, to whom it serves as winter quarters, had gone to the mountains with their tents and flocks. A shepherd, however, gave us the intelligence that Ahmi, the chief of the Muguru tribe, was encamped on the plain, and that we could not help meeting him on our way.

This news was enough to put me in a state of feverish excitement, as the so much spoken of black tents, with a host of Koords, were at last to appear before me. After having trotted awhile across coun-

try, I came within sight of three large black tents of a model quite new to me. Near to them a small white tent had been pitched, similar to our military tents. Such a diminutive specimen of a Koordish camp disappointed me exceedingly, and it was with a certain degree of unwillingness that I alighted before the entrance of the chief's tent. As our approach had been signalized, a party composed of three horsemen came to reconnoitre us beforehand. The magic effect of the uniform was quite enough to make these horsemen bow very low while they offered their services as guides to show the way to the tents. On entering the tent, Ahmi greeted me with an apparently hearty welcome, while his sons, and a promiscuous crowd of warriors and chiefs, blocked up my way, disputing with each other the right of obtaining a thoroughly good sight of the new-comer.

The first excitement once abated, the whole of the assembly sat down in a circle, the younger ones kneeling and sitting on their legs, and the elders crossing theirs comfortably. Behind this inner circle a second formed itself, composed of attendants and bystanders. Every one of the members of this assembly was provided, as a matter of course, with a good stock of arms. While the Koords were talking and gesticulating amongst themselves, I had a thorough look at the disposition of the tent. Externally, this was a genuine Koordish tent, woven

with black goats'-hair, sustained by two poles. Inside, however, it had been lined with red cloth, and it was embroidered in the height of barbaric style. A simple Koordish tent would have been far better than the one in which we were, as it is spacious and airy. Ahmi was evidently a swell in his own way; he had a fancy for what no one but himself could have. The sight offered by that promiscuous collection of tall and short, old and young, Koords, some of them in their natural tint, others with painted beards, eyebrows, and eyelashes, the imposing air which their turbans gave them, the lively effect produced by the various colours displayed in their costumes, their becoming and easy postures, every detail, in a word, contributed to make this assembly an interesting *tableau.*

But the interest which the sight of the Koords offered was still greater on account of its association with the historical records transmitted by Xenophon with regard to the old customs and fashions of the inhabitants of this region. In seeing the Koords of the present day so skilful in the art of embellishing themselves, one could not help recollecting what the Greek historian relates about the first interview of Cyrus with his grandfather, Astyages, king of the Medes. "On remarking* that he (his grandfather) was handsomely adorned, with his eyes and

* "Cyropedia," book i. chap. iii.

face painted, and that he wore false hair (wig),—all things which are in use with the Medes, for the Medes knew all this sort of things,—the scarlet tunics and the scarlet cloaks, &c."

Is it not a subject of wonder to find, after so many centuries, a race of men who still wear the same costumes and preserve the same habits as those of the ancient inhabitants of this country? What better illustration could we have of Xenophon's description of the Medes of old than that which is offered in our days by the appearance and dress of a nomadic chieftain in northern Koordistan?

If the circle in the midst of which I was thrown had for me the attraction which something so totally new must exert, I myself was no less for the Koords a rare and curious specimen of humanity. My youngish looks, my restless movements, my *tout-ensemble*, seemed to astonish these primitive individuals, who could not imagine any other shape for a superior officer but that of a fat round Turk, grave in his looks, solemn in his gestures, trying to impose on the masses by the sham majesty of his demeanour. It was strange, however, to see how quickly their surprise changed into admiration as they became acquainted with the fact that I was highly connected at Constantinople. This bit of news had evidently the effect of infusing a larger amount of caloric into their friendly feelings towards me.

This increase of friendship was soon exemplified by a good breakfast, of which Ahmi hastened to request me to partake. The *déjeuner* served on this occasion was nothing portentous, consisting of some ten or fourteen dishes prepared with barbaric taste. The eating business once over, I did not prolong my stay, but took leave of Ahmi, carrying with me the favourable impressions which arise from hospitality and friendly intercourse. How little did I think then that the present friendly meeting would be followed by open hostilities against my host. Under cover of dissimulation and politeness, this chief concealed, as has been stated, a boundless and ravenous ambition. His only business being that of scheming and intriguing, it is easy to explain on what grounds Ahmi was at that time holding an œcumenical council of all the troublesome spirits of the tribes. The intelligence which I obtained afterwards made me acquainted with the object of this assembly, which was the formation of an alliance for the purpose of crushing and destroying another tribe, the Milans.

On leaving Ahmi's tent I went across fields and ravines towards the site where the whole of Ahmi's tents were encamped This encampment was within three quarters of an hour's distance, and almost facing the village of Asturdji. The track I was pursuing followed a due easterly course, so that, while approaching

the camp, my party was gaining ground on a parallel with the main road leading to Serai and Kotur. The consideration of economising distance did not, however, enter much in my calculations at the moment. My only and as yet unrevealed object in going astray was that of giving full scope to my romantic desire for a sight of the Koordish fair sex. The attraction of a Koordish camp of some size, its disposition and the originality of its effect, were at present quite secondary questions. My disappointment at not finding a single female figure in the midst of the people that were crammed within the precincts of Ahmi's tents, had had an exasperating effect on my temper. Anxious, therefore, to give vent to the sulkiness and bad humour of the moment, I trotted away in search of the fair ones of Koordistan.

The *blasé*, who has gloriously passed the days of his youth in the midst of the *grand monde*, filling to his heart's content the overflowing cup of enjoyment and pleasure, has never perhaps experienced that delight of which a son of Adam is sensible while roving through the wilds of Koordistan. Life for the first has been a honeymoon stretched over years and years; no sooner a want was felt, than ready at hand were the means to satisfy it; no wish within the limits of possibility could ever arise, for the gratification of which an easy way was not devised. But everything in nature is subject to reaction, and the satisfaction of

all acute desires has for its result the destruction of all ardent wishes.

The sweet and exhilarating image of woman is the supreme of charms, the one most eagerly sought after everywhere and at all times, but especially amidst the excitement of an adventurous life. Her magnetic power, however, scarcely penetrates through the inanimate mass of a *blasé*, who, proof to feeling and sentiment, blindly rejects its beneficial influence. This phenomenon is explained by what I have already defined as being the principle of reaction. And how could it be otherwise when one has no greater trouble to encounter than to take a stroll through the Park between five and seven, or to knock at the door of a friend, where he will find himself at the feet of a goddess! It ought not to be a subject of surprise, therefore, if a fellow of this description throws on one side the fervent zeal of chivalry, grows indifferent to the power of the fair, takes philosophy as a guide through life, and ends at last by gnawing quietly the tip of his pipe. In the days of my boyhood, I happened to have a peep at the *grand monde* of our British metropolis as through the lens of a cosmorama; but with the first season the sweet dream soon vanished, leaving my mind under the shade of evergreen illusions. The sweet reminiscences of what I had seen of the queen of creation in the midst of the *éclat* of civilization, made me naturally eager to admire her in her primitive and original state.

It was not long before a thick mass of dark-brown coloured tents, divided into four rows, two on one side of a little plain, and two on the other, appeared close before us. We perceived from that distance several men stepping out of the tents and getting quickly into the saddle. In a few minutes five of them were up to us, inquiring if the party was directed to the chief's tent. On entering the camp, swarms of little naked children were standing in our path, while groups of women and men remained before their tents staring at the coming guests. While passing between the two rows of tents, one could distinctly see their internal arrangement, as during the day the front part of what may be styled the door remains lifted up by means of four long poles, so as to allow the inmates to enjoy the advantages of air and light. Before some of the tents naked or half-naked children were playing and rolling in the dust, while others, incapable of moving, were quietly toasting their limbs under the rays of a scorching sun. In many places ready-bridled horses could be seen standing patiently by the side of a lance stuck in the ground. The dogs were not as numerous as I expected to find them. The reason of this was that in the daytime these animals leave the camp in the company of the flocks; it is only at night that the dogs gather from all sides, and keep a diligent watch over their masters and their property.

The individuals who were guiding the party brought us before a tent, which, from its size and style, could easily be supposed to be Ahmi's residence. His younger son, a lad of seventeen, accompanied by several grown-up persons, did the honours of the reception, and showed me up to a sort of elevated platform covered with turf, on which some prayer-carpets and pillows served as substitutes for a sofa. The regulation coffee was then poured into pretty good-sized cups, and distributed to all the distinguished persons who were perched with me on the platform. As for the pipe which was presented to me, I declined the objectionable gift, preferring naturally the taste of my clean cigarette.

In the meanwhile an express had been despatched on the sly to Ahmi by his people, to acquaint him of my visit, with a view evidently of taking his orders on the subject. This intelligence must have taken the old chief by surprise, as on parting from him there had been no question of my visiting his camp. This resolution had been taken by me all of a sudden while *en route*. The messenger was not long in coming back, bringing from his chief the assurance of the delight he felt in having me as his guest for that night, and requesting me to make myself at home till his arrival.

I took advantage of the daylight, and of the absence of old Ahmi, in order to stroll about the tents, in

the hope of having a thorough good glance of the fair maids of the tribe. I opened the subject with a certain amount of caution at first, and entered into conversation with the people around me, intimating that in my opinion they were perfectly right in keeping their women free and unveiled, and that I admired their wisdom in not attempting to imitate the foolish people of Stambul, who shut up their women like birds in a cage. When women are corrupt it is much worse to shut them up than to let them free. "Yes," answered a knowing-looking old fellow, "your women are much more handsome than ours; our lasses are sunburnt and coarse, that's the reason we let them loose like sheep; give me a Stambulee wife, and by Allah! I'll shut her up so thoroughly that she shan't see the light of the sun."

In saying these words the black little orbs of the old man were sparkling like lucifers in the dark, and his jovial temper was indicated by a smiling contraction of his lips. "Well," said I, taking advantage of the animated tone the conversation had assumed, "there's a good bargain for you, my friend; give me one of your Koordish women, and I will give you a first-rate Stambulee wife. I will begin now," I added, "by selecting the one I like; and I promise to send you a wife from Stambul such as you may like." While thus joking we left the chief's tent, and, forming a party of six or seven persons, began to

stroll about the encampment. As for myself, I was intent on discerning a living object of admiration, in some way like a modern Eve.

At first sight I was able to ascertain that the tents were fully provided with the female element; every tent having five, six, and even ten female inmates. Some were nursing their little ones while seated on the ground, others were spinning wool and chatting together. Round the fire-hole other women seemed busy in stirring a suspended kettle, while in a corner of the tent a group was netting carpets and other woollen stuffs. Instead of looking shy, and rushing for shelter behind some obstacle or other, as Turkish women are in the habit of doing when within range of the eyes of a male, these Koordish women, whether young or old, fair or ugly, maintained the most natural and free demeanour on our approach. That curiosity which the arrival of a stranger must naturally produce made them fix their eyes on me and my attendants; but in their way of gazing there was something easy and simple, which revealed the purity and simplicity of their soul. Of course the matrons stared in a more familiar and bolder way, while the young maids—and especially the pretty ones—lowered at intervals the luxurious veil of their long eyelashes.

The old man had been all this while slyly spying the movements of my eyes, in order to detect the im-

pression which the sight of the beauties of his tribe produced upon me. Thinking very likely that I was not quite satisfied with the samples I had seen, "What do you think, Bey," said he abruptly, "of our pretty girls? Are they handsome or not?" "*Mashallah! Mashallah!*" was the only answer which Oriental politeness required from me. This exclamation is meant to convey the idea that the being or object you admire is a "marvel of God." The funny old Koord was not, however, of a humour to be easily convinced that my compliment was a *bonâ fide* one. Accordingly he turned sharply towards me, saying, in a subdued tone of voice, "Come this way, Bey, and I will show you one girl whose equal does not exist amongst any of the tribes. Come, come." Following, then, my good-natured guide, I entered another tent, situated on the opposite row, and there we approached an octogenarian patriarch, who could scarcely move to bid us welcome. The guide sat amongst us for a while, chatted with the old man and his relations in Koordish, threw some attentive glances towards that side of the tent reserved for women, and, rising all of a sudden from his seat, disappeared.

Curious to know how matters would end, and anxious at the same time to see a creature so much praised by the old fellow, I was attentively turning my eyes in all directions, when two or three women approached quietly and gently from behind the place where we were

seated. Close to us the ladies halted, leaned their elbows on the partition boards that were placed in that spot, and began staring at the assembly. I hastened to repay the compliment, but to my great disappointment no beauty was to be perceived; on the contrary, the intruders decidedly belonged to the plain class of the fair sex. The old guide then popped in again, and, taking his seat by my side, whispered to me, "Now, Bey, you'll see." During this interval the number of the fair spectators had been slowly increasing, a lot of young lasses having crept in one after the other. It was not possible, however, that the beauty could remain any length of time undetected before a scrutinizing eye, as the charms of her face were such that she would at once have been pointed out amongst thousands of her sex.

To describe now what this Koordish girl was like, and to attempt to draw a portrait of her, is a task of which I declare myself incapable. What I can say is, that her complexion gave one an idea of what must have been the bloom of the forbidden apple of the terrestrial paradise. Her eyes, of a dark chestnut, shone like brilliants piercing through the veil of her thick eyelashes, while nose and mouth were perfect in their shape and delicacy. Though the garments she wore were not of a superior sort, yet, through their folds, her graceful form could be detected. But what above all contributed to make her

really charming was the calm, simple and, so to say, infant-like air which distinguished her countenance and the whole of her demeanour.

It is superfluous to state that before such a divinity I was but one among the many admirers who fixed their eyes upon her. All faces were almost mechanically turned that way, while several exclamations of "Mashallah!" rose from the very depths of the heart of some sensitive admirer. As was to be expected the poor girl could not stand the magnetic effect of such a demonstration of our feelings, and disappeared with the rapidity of a flash of lightning, leaving our hearts in a state of profound emotion. Shortly after I left the tent, but, on taking leave, I requested the old guide to give to the family several handkerchiefs as a souvenir from me, insisting that the first one should be given to the fair *Sulti* as a token of my admiration. It is to be remarked, however, that *Sulti*, which name is the Koordish for Sultana, was not the only fine woman I happened to see in the camp, as one of the young wives of the chief, Ahmi, and especially the widow of his son, the daughter of the chief of the Milan tribe, were both of them remarkable for their beauty.

After having achieved our tour along the different rows of tents we came back to head-quarters, where we had not long to wait for the chief's arrival. A little before sunset Ahmi made his entry into the

camp, at the head of a numerous host of warriors, who formed an imposing line of battle behind him; while some restless and bellicose horsemen were hovering in front and charging each other with swords and spears. I stepped forward to receive the chief, who, alighting from his horse, came to take a seat on the platform which constituted something like his throne of state.

Ahmi's tent had something imposing and grand about it. From its high pinnacles the skirts of the dark-brown tent, made of goats'-hair, gracefully drooped to the ground, while the front was lifted up by means of several poles, leaving thus a spacious entrance, such as suited the dignity of a chief's abode. All around the skirts of the tent a mat of weeds about one yard and a half in height was fixed to the ground, so as to allow free access to light and air, while serving to protect the inmates from the glances of indiscreet observers. This mat-work was interwoven with embroidered designs of various colours and shapes, the whole representing an ingenious combination of workmanship and effect. Within the tent a mat of the same kind was drawn as a sort of partition-wall between the space occupied by the women and that destined for the use of the male members of the family.

After Ahmi's arrival we had not long to wait for dinner, which consisted as usual of a profusion of

roast and minced meats and pilaf. Dry apricots and raisins, prepared with syrup made of butter and sugar, were served on the table as sweets in the middle and at the end of the repast. A number of bits of pine-wood were disposed like torches in front of the tent, emitting all around a smoky light from the midst of numerous sparks. The light was, however, glaring enough to enliven the company and show clearly the countenances of the bystanders and the expression of joviality which animated them.

After dinner a large circle was formed partly within the precinct of the tent and partly outside. There were to be seen the young and the old warriors of the tribe mixed promiscuously together, all seated in a row with their legs crossed on the turf. While the assembly was humorously intent on laughing and chatting, some voices began almost spontaneously to intonate in chorus a series of Koordish melodies of a pathetic and sentimental nature. By degrees, as the feelings of the amateurs got excited, the expression of their eyes, of their mouths, and of their whole countenances was transformed, assuming the most comically amorous appearance imaginable. Some of those hardy faces were remarkable for the contrast offered by their stern and manly features and the softness which the power of music was at the moment impressing on them, while others could not help looking very foolish with the affected air of

spoony troubadours which they were trying to give to themselves.

This vocal entertainment went on for two full hours; and I must say that it was not at all displeasing, as by degrees I began to find this sort of music melodious and sweet,—much more so than Turkish music. The best proof of the value which the Koordish music possesses is surely this,—that amongst the many tunes which were sung that night one of them struck my musical nerves so powerfully that for a considerable time it did not fade from my mind, and I used to sing it with pleasure. Unfortunately I cannot now recollect it, otherwise I should not have failed to give a sample of it in the shape of a Koordish tune reproduced in notes.

In the morning, before taking leave of old Ahmi, we had a long and confidential *tête-à-tête* together. This diplomatic chat, which was longer than I should have liked it to be, revealed the secret chords which had led Ahmi to give me such a sumptuous reception and to grant me honours due almost to royalty alone. Ahmi, as I have said, was at the head of an alliance planned by him amongst the tribes. He had, however, a dangerous enemy to be afraid of, and that was my lieutenant-colonel and the military force at his disposal. As I was now to take the command from the colonel, Ahmi evidently tried his best to ensure my friendship, or at least my neutrality, in case hostilities

were resumed. I, of course, took good care not to fall into the old fox's snares by compromising myself in any way, and all that he could get out of me was the assurance that I would follow an impartial course, avoiding to espouse the cause of the one or of the other; but that if, at the same time, any one of them, whosoever he might be, should render himself guilty of treacherous acts and of rebellion, I should in such a case feel bound to act according to instructions. It would have been difficult to foretell then that, within two months' time, I should be compelled to attack this very Ahmi, kill some twenty-five of his men and kindred; and that the whole of the tribe—men and women who had so warmly greeted my arrival — would utter imprecations against me. I must say, however, that Ahmi and his tribe fully deserved the enmity which my colonel bore against them, as it would be difficult to find elsewhere a more troublesome and treacherous lot than this Muguru tribe. What I did to them was only a just retribution for their misdeeds.

CHAPTER XIII.

Asturdji—Serai—Temo the Nestorian—Sherefhaneh—Koordish Camp—Valley of the Kotur River—Arrival at Kotur—The Fortress—Its District—The Mudir Ahmed-Agha—Albanian Bashibozooks—Adventures of Ismail-Agha.

FROM the camp of Ahmi I directed my course to the village of Asturdji, which stands in a valley covered with swamps. The malaria existing in this neighbourhood has such a deadly effect as to be fatal even to the Koords who ought to be more or less acclimatized. This village is only within ten minutes walk from the high road which leads to Serai. Before getting to the road, one must cross the main stream, of which I have already spoken as pouring its waters into Lake Ertjek. This stream serves to put into motion four or five mills constructed by the Koords on the most primitive model. It is fortunate for this people that they have made so much progress in mechanical science, otherwise they would have been compelled to live without the benefit of bread. The mills are, after all, the only specimen of industry which one meets with in Koordistan. Of course the produce of the industry of women and of the Armenian population is

naturally deducted from this statement. Windmills are quite unknown in this part of Koordistan.

Crossing the ridge of hills which shuts in the valley of Asturdji on the east, my party came in sight of the plain of Serai, which has a length of six miles. The whole of this tract of territory is cultivated by the habitants of Serai, who are Nestorians. These fields produce very good corn crops, but not a single bud or shrub is to be seen upon them. It is to this bare state of the country that is to be attributed in some measure the intense heat and the extreme cold which reign during the summer and winter seasons. It is true that the elevation of this plateau is considerable with regard both to the level of the lake of Van and to the plains of Persia, but the want of all verdure and cultivation has a great influence in making any region less inhabitable and its climate less congenial.

The borough of Serai has the appearance of a considerable place because of its being scattered over a large tract of territory. On entering, however, one is soon convinced of his error, and finds that the great borough does not amount to more than thirty houses. The houses in this place are not quite buried under ground as they generally are elsewhere, a portion remaining above. This may be a reason why Serai looks larger than it really is. A nice little church stands on a small elevation just above the vil-

lage, and is surrounded by the burial ground of the community. The church is quite new, and very simple in its style. Inside there were no paintings or images to be seen, and the only sign of worship was an altar and a crucifix, as the Nestorian Christians have a greater affinity to the Protestant faith than to the Catholic or Orthodox religions.

The inhabitants of Serai are a very laborious and honest sort of men. However, their condition is far from being satisfactory. The visits of travellers and caravans who are constantly going to and fro, the daily arrivals of swarms of Koords who consider Serai a sort of neutral ground, most suitable for their assemblies, councils, and plots, have as a result to squeeze this poor people beyond all conception. To understand matters properly the reader must be acquainted with the fact that very few of these locust-like visitors pay anything for their consumption. All of them, their horses included, take good care to provide for what they want gratis. These Nestorians came originally from the mountains, where they had no means of subsistence; now, in their new establishment, they consider themselves happy enough if they can keep body and soul together.

These people have preserved the independent character and the sense of self-respect which distinguish the mountaineer from the tamer inhabitant of the plain. Though surrounded by hosts of Koords and isolated

from his kinsmen of the mountain, the Nestorian of Serai is a fierce individual, who is far from resembling the Armenian. He possesses a rifle, and his enemies know the value of it. He therefore bargains for his alliance with whichever party he chooses, and, by making himself either useful or dangerous, asserts his right to consideration and to a relative independence. The Koords, on their side, have an interest in insuring to themselves a place of refuge where they can find shelter when overpowered by a successful enemy. It is evidently also to their advantage not to crush and ruin completely a host to whose hospitality they are often compelled to have recourse.

The position of Serai renders it a very important place on the frontier line, as the Persian territory is only at two hours distance from this point. It is true that the Turkish dominions extend about fourteen hours further east, following the valley of Kotur, but here, to the east-north-east of Serai, the boundary between the two empires is close at hand. This circumstance makes Serai an important spot for the Koordish tribes who wish to escape to either side of the frontier, as well as for the Turks and Persians who have an interest in pursuing them. Whenever a Koordish tribe marches off in order to evade the pursuit of its enemies or to baffle the hand of authority, it directs its course towards Serai, and from thence crosses the pass of Boghaz-kiessen (the cut-throat pass) and reaches

easily the wooded district of Alend. Once at Boghaz-kiessen the tribe is on Persian territory.

On approaching Serai a deputation of the principal inhabitants, headed by the kïaïa of the village, came to meet me. Temo or Thomas was the name of the Nestorian chief, a dark-looking, strongly-built fellow, who, a despot in miniature, had subjected to his authority everyone in the clan. This he had done by a strong will and a resolute character, with the support which he had received from the officers commanding the troops stationed along the frontier. With the object of gaining my support also, the little tyrant did all he could to conciliate me. He took me to his house, where everything was prepared for my reception in the best way he could; and during the whole of the evening he remained before me seated on his knees, endeavouring to amuse me by his obsequious and burlesque manners, not omitting, however, to supply me with all kinds of information. From that night I put Temo on the list of my *protégés*, and told him that I would rely upon him for any question which might arise in that neighbourhood with regard to the Koords. I knew that men of action and pluck, as Temo undoubtedly was, are of great value in such countries. The result proved that I was not mistaken in my appreciation of this man.

The next day I left Serai at an early hour, following the road which leads to Sherefhaneh. The ground

is continually rising from Serai to Sherefhaneh, and from this latter village up to a distance of an hour's ride. As the road passes within sight of Sherefhaneh, and to deviate from our course for the sake of a dirty little village would have been a mere loss of time, we continued to ascend, leaving Sherefhaneh on our left.

Before reaching the summit we found a large marsh formed by the melting snows which accumulate on this elevated little plateau. On its borders some Koords had pitched their tents in order to pass the spring there. This predilection of the Koords for encamping in the proximity of a stream, lake, or pond, arises from the want of wells. Throughout northern Koordistan wells are very rare, and few are the villages which can boast of possessing one. The ridge which we soon crossed on leaving behind us the marsh is a remarkable point. It is the dividing ridge which separates the tributaries of Lake Van and of the Euphrates from those that, following an easterly course, throw themselves into the Caspian.

On looking from the top of this ridge, a succession of secondary ridges and deep ravines present themselves to the eye of the traveller, after which the dark-looking mass of the Hakkiari range shuts up the sight of the horizon. The road which I followed descended and rose along the sides of these ridges till it got into a larger ravine, at the bottom of which runs one of the affluents

of the Kotur river. Our party continued to descend this narrow valley, while enormous blocks of barren rocks were hanging over our heads. After an hour's ride we entered into the main valley, in the middle of which flows the Kotur river, and the road from this point runs parallel with its banks. It is here, at the junction of two valleys, that the two roads which lead from Van to Kotur meet. The road going to Van ascends the principal stream, passes across the plain of Tchöl-tchemen, and thence goes straight to Van, whereas the one over which we had been going passes by Serai, &c. Koordish marauders generally swarm in this neighbourhood. We did not meet with any of them, however.

Kotur is at a distance of two hours from this point. The valley generally widens from here till it emerges into the still larger valley of Kotur. This valley is formed of a plain which stretches itself from north to south, and is bounded by three ranges of mountains limiting it on the north, east, and south. At the foot of the eastern range the two streams which form the Kotur river make their junction, one coming from the south and the other from the west. The town of Kotur is situated close to the junction of the two streams, at the foot of a steep hill which is surmounted by the fort. The town faces the west, while the fort commands the approaches from the east and west. In this part of the world Kotur enjoys the rank

of a town, though the number of the houses it contains does not amount to more than two hundred. All the houses are built under ground in the Koordish style, except four or five buildings, which consist of a khan, the barracks, the residence of the Mudir, and two other houses. Kotur is very poor and miserable in appearance. Its lanes and the surrounding fields are all the year round buried under a thick cover of dung, which when dry serves to make fuel, and a few nasty little shops are sufficient to provide its inhabitants with the luxuries of life. During the time of my command, I undertook to do something in order to render this spot more congenial to taste and more like a civilized place. As the river passes through the town, I made two parallel embankments, filling all the muddy ground with earth, so as to form two capital esplanades on both sides. Two rows of poplars were also planted by the water's edge, in imitation of the *quais* which adorn the banks of the Seine, while at both extremities of the embankment two wooden bridges were constructed under my direction, in order to facilitate the communication between the two shores. These bridges were solid enough, being able to support the whole of my regiment when defiling by sections. I did not think it worth while to give my bridges any historic name, such as *Le Pont de Solferino* or *Le Pont de Magenta*, so that they have remained unbaptized as yet.

The population of Kotur* does not exceed 8000 inhabitants, of which the greatest part are Koords, and a small portion Armenians; but neither of them has ever thought of constructing a mosque or a church. The Armenians have, by-the-bye, a kind of stable made into a church. That is surely better than nothing, especially as the Redeemer was first worshipped in a stable. The fort of Kotur, which is not worth mentioning in a military point of view, stands perched on the top of a rock. The ascent to it is very difficult, but it is still more difficult for a defender to remain inside its walls, as there is not a single drop of water to be had. The walls and the two bastions which form its defence are constructed of pise, a substance not of much use against a cannon-ball. In case of a war between Persians and Turks, the greater fool of the two would be he who would shut himself up in this so-called fort.

On approaching the town, I despatched a messenger to announce to the Lieutenant-Colonel my arrival. The officers of the regiment hastened, on receiving the news, to meet me in a body, greeting me with welcome. The formalities of an official reception once discharged, I directed myself, accompanied by the officers, to the camp, where we alighted before the tent of the Lieutenant-Colonel. I found this individual seated with great ostentation within a grand

* Of the district.

tent, waiting, motionless, my arrival. Two of his servants stepped forward to do me the honour of sustaining my arms while alighting from the horse. As I saw that this was a piece of impertinence perpetrated purposely by this Colonel, in order not to lower his dignity by rising politely before an inferior, I shook myself off from the officious pressure of his servants, and getting into his tent, sharply told him that "I had no need of help or support to come down from or to get on my horse."

The Colonel's name was Mustapha Bey, a knave of the worst sort, such as it would be hard to find anywhere else. His only object in life was to get as much money as possible. He had thus been swallowing the very flesh and bones of the unfortunate soldiers. Thieves are generally cowards, and so was this so-called Colonel, his cowardice being a subject of mirth amongst officers and soldiers. They relate that when the Turkish forces were defeated by the Russians at Bayazid during the late war, this Mustapha Bey took to flight as fast as he could. The charger he rode at that critical moment was a bay horse. The Colonel caught hold of his horse's neck with both arms, and whilst at full speed shouted as hard as he could to his steed, "Aman, my bay! Aman! Aman, my bay!" The horse, incited by these entreating words of despair, did his best, and managed to get the valiant warrior to safe quarters.

This fellow is now full Colonel, and has the honour of commanding one of the Sultan's regiments.

A long conversation was not possible between me and this individual. Magnetic influence is a powerful and often a sure means by which people know each other at once; and at first sight both of us became fully convinced that no understanding could be established between us. Fortunately, the Colonel was not to remain long with the regiment, as he had been recalled to headquarters, and the command was to be ceded to me. The troops which were thus left under my command consisted of a battalion, of three hundred Albanian Bashibozooks, and of two pieces of mountain artillery. The duty entrusted to this force was that of watching the frontier, having Kotur as headquarters, and several detachments along the valley of the Kotur river, and in the proximity of the Persian frontier. These precautions had become at that time necessary, on account of the claims which the Persian Government was bringing forward with regard to the territory of Kotur and several other points along the frontier.

The district of Kotur is composed of the town of the same name and of eighteen villages, the greatest part of which are situated in the valley of the Kotur river. This district formed part of the Persian dominions some twenty years ago; afterwards the

Turks took possession of it, very much against the will of the Persians. As this district is only within a distance of two hours from the flourishing town of Khoi, by ceding these defiles the Persians actually gave to a foreign Power the key to an important part of their territory.

A thing which I cannot help remarking here is the startling difference existing between the Turkish and the Persian dominions. On the Turkish side the very aspect of the country attests almost utter desolation. Scarcely a tree is to be found anywhere; the mountains are bare and rocky; and the valleys lie fallow, affording no products either to man or beast. If one turns his eye, however, to the plains of Persia, there he will see large tracts of territory highly cultivated, thick forests, fine gardens and orchards—everything, in a word, which proves the prosperity of a country. At Khoi two fine avenues, shaded by the branches of ancient trees, serve to embellish the neighbourhood of the town, while they afford to the inhabitants recreation and comfort. The water of the river Kotur serves to fructify the plains of Khoi, while it is of no advantage in the upper valleys of the Kotur. Of course, the reason is that in one place the inhabitants are more civilized, whereas in the other they are not much above savages.

The inhabitants of the district of Kotur are Koords, belonging to a tribe known under the denomination

of Shemsiklis. A portion of this people live on the Persian territory. Far from being a warlike lot, the Shemsiklis, on the contrary, are more tame and domesticated than the rest of their kinsmen. Their taste for the nomadic life being not so developed, they are more fond of their homes, and spend only about four months of the year under the tent. As for robbing and murdering, that seems to be too sweet a pastime for any Koord to relinquish, and these people do their best in that line whenever the opportunity presents itself.

The Mudir, that is the sub-prefect of this district, is a Koord, named Ahmed-Agha, who holds this position as a fief belonging to his family, descending thus from father to son. The way in which his father got from the Turks this investiture is curious, and, as such, worth relating. In 1848, at the epoch when the International Commission was making a tour along this frontier with the object of fixing definitely the limits between the Persian and the Turkish territories, the Commission found the district of Kotur to be one of the points the possession of which was contested by both parties. The Turks, anxious to substantiate their claims to the possession of it, had recourse to the following expedient. They made a bargain with Makhsud-Agha, the father of Ahmed, by which Makhsud and his descendants were to be

acknowledged as the chiefs of the district, provided he proved to the Commissioners that the territory of Kotur belonged by right to Turkey. Makhsud had a vital interest in getting his district under the authority of the Sultan rather than remaining under the Persian rule; as through craft and violence he had usurped the supreme power over his tribe, exterminating the family of its former rulers. The Persians being the supporters of the claims of the lawful chiefs, Makhsud found safety in getting the support of the Turks.

With that view he collected amongst his partisans several white-bearded asses, and presented them to the Commission as genuine witnesses, who could prove, as easily as two and two make four, that the district of Kotur belonged from time immemorial to Turkey, and not to Persia. The members of the Commission, who had an interest in supporting Turkey, accepted the evidence brought forward by Makhsud, and decreed that the territory of Kotur should henceforward belong to the Turks. Since that time the old Makhsud and his family have remained the undisputed rulers of that district, their allegiance to the Porte being a mere matter of form. An annual tribute to the imperial exchequer, and some periodical offerings in the shape of *bakhshish* to the Pashas of the neighbourhood, such are the conditions which Makhsud

and his successor have never failed to fulfil with the greatest exactitude.

Makhsud once gathered to his fathers, Ahmed succeeded him. This fellow turned out to be as crafty a rogue as the father; while, on the other hand, as blood-thirsty a villain cannot always be found about the Calabrias or the Roman Campagna. The first step necessary in Turkey to insure the success of brigandage, is that of buying the connivance of the authorities placed a little above. Ahmed-Agha did his best in that way, and through skilful diplomacy, as well as by means of more substantial proofs of loyalty, succeeded in becoming a pet of many Pashas, governors, and generals. Through his protectors' influence he even obtained the crown of his ambition, by being named an honorary chamberlain of the imperial household, and receiving the order of the Medjidieh.

On the field of action Ahmed was also very successful. That is natural enough, because success on the one side brings as a consequence impunity and free scope on the other. On every road or pass which crosses his district, Ahmed established small detachments of bandits, headed by his own relatives and partisans. His nephews, for instance, were generally to be seen at daytime strolling about the bazaar, but at night they often disappeared from the midst of

society, as they were then roaming about the country in search of prey.

To sum up the many caravans that have been robbed, the travellers that have been stripped of everything, and those that have been pitilessly murdered in order to satisfy the rapacity and ferocity of Ahmed-Agha, would be rather a difficult computation to achieve. During my stay at Kotur, two cases of manslaughter took place, in both of which Ahmed had the greatest share. The first was the murder of the director of the quarantine established at Kotur. The poor man had gone to the town of Khoi, where he intended buying some provisions as well as other things necessary for his household. On coming back, while going along the borders of the Kotur river, he is reported to have fallen amongst the rocks and chasms, and to have thus broken his neck. At Kotur we were all expecting the director of the quarantine to be back that night, when two ominous-looking Koords threw before my door the unfortunate man's body, relating that they had found the corpse frozen in the middle of the stream.

The bruises and wounds which I detected on his head were there to prove that the death of Mehemet-Effendi was the result of a crime rather than that of an accident. If, besides the evidence afforded by the inspection of the body, one were to take into consi-

deration what had taken place between the director of the quarantine and Ahmed-Agha, the magistrate, previous to the death, very little doubt could remain as to the guilt of this individual. Mehemet-Effendi, pushed by a praiseworthy zeal, had been foolish enough to denounce Ahmed-Agha to the Constantinople authorities as being concerned in smuggling speculations along the frontier. Ahmed had therefore a grudge against the unfortunate Mehemet for attacking him in his vital interests, and to make short work of him was evidently the plan to which the villain had recourse. As the man whom I suspected of being the perpetrator of this foul deed was the magistrate of the place, I felt grieved at seeing it out of my power to do anything on behalf of the relatives of the victim, and I was compelled to hold my tongue.

Shortly after, another murder followed. This was perpetrated on a Jewish merchant of Bash-kaleh. This Jew had come to Kotur in the month of February, 1863, in order to accomplish his yearly commercial tour through that district. It seems that the operations of the Israelite merchant were crowned with success, as it is reported that he succeeded in gathering from his customers a sum of nearly four hundred pounds—not at all a trifling sum in this part of the world. The magistrate, Ahmed-Agha, having received intelligence of the bulky sum carried by the Jew, quickly sent one of his bands to lay an ambus-

cade for him and take all he had, even his life. These orders were punctually executed by the ruffians, who, after having taken what they most wanted, thought that the best way to escape punishment was to effect the complete disappearance of the Jew by mincing his body and scattering the remains right and left over the country.

Crime in Turkey often remains unpunished, and the magistrate, Ahmed-Agha, the murderer of the Jew, was allowed to enjoy unhurt the fruits of his crime. The dread, however, of falling into my clutches must have caused him several nights of fear and agitation. As I had grounds to believe that this fellow was the real cause of the crimes which were committed all about the country, I hastened to send detachments of troops with orders to seize all those who were known to be the agents of his nefarious deeds. No consideration of respect for his position or authority could deter me this time from adopting summary measures and establishing martial law. By morning, in less than twelve hours, I succeeded in getting hold of eighteen fellows—some of them brigands, some of them partners. Placed before a military tribunal, it was impossible for the assassins not to reveal their crimes and accomplices, and Ahmed, the magistrate, was proved to have been the chief culprit in the whole affair. The civil authority having, however, taken the prosecution into its own hands, the case turned out to be quite dif-

ferent. Ahmed-Agha was declared innocent, and the assassins hired by him received full absolution with the remission of their sins.

I must here, before ending the present chapter, say something about the Albanian Bashibozooks placed under my orders. Though the generality of English readers are already acquainted with what Albanian and Bashibozook mean, what I am going to say about them will not be found utterly void of interest. This barbarian denomination of a still more barbarian species was formerly entirely unknown to the west of Europe, and it is to the Crimean war that we are indebted for the boon of having become acquainted with the name of Bashibozooks—the name which the Sultan gives to his irregular, undisciplined soldiers. The meaning of this epithet is "wrongheads," from the two combined words bash (head), and bozook (wrong, or spoiled).

The use of this kind of troops is not confined to the time of war—as for instance during the Crimean war—but permanent, the Sultan having always several bands of Bashibozooks stationed in different parts of the empire. In time of war these bands augment in number and proportions, and serve as light troops attached to the regular armies; while in ordinary times they are employed in some places as economical substitutes for regular troops. The Bashibozooks are nothing else, properly speaking, but the remains of

the old military organization of Turkey. As the Turkish armies have gradually been subjected to the European organization, the Bashibozook element has seen its ranks thinned by degrees, and has been reduced to but few bands.

The reasons why that system has not as yet been done away with are twofold. The first, as I have already stated, is economy, the maintenance and locomotion of such troops being much cheaper than that of regular corps. If their efficiency is to be taken into account, then of course the question is quite different. The Bashibozooks are in our days of very little use, if not a burden. The great reason, however, why the Bashibozooks are still in use in Turkey, is that they offer to the Pashas and other officials a source of abundant profit. Commissions authorizing a chief to raise a body of one or two thousand Bashibozooks are sold by the Porte at the rate of a million of piastres—eight or ten thousand pounds. The chief having once obtained the concession by wholesale, hastens to go to the country, where he sells his companies in retail to the *buluk-bashis*—a sort of captains. The captains on their own account follow the example of the chief, selling to the sergeants the remainder of the subdivisions.

In order to understand how this Bashibozook concern is managed, some explanations must be given with respect to its organization. The administrative,

and (if I may be allowed to use for the Bashibozooks the technical expression) the tactical unity of these troops is a body whose strength varies from four hundred to a thousand men. This corps is under the command of a *sergierdeh*, whose rank is something similar to that of major or commander of a battalion. This unity of the Bashibozook forces is subdivided into companies reputed to be a hundred strong.

The Bashibozooks, being irregulars, have no peculiar uniform, nor any selected and recognised model of arms, but dress and arm themselves as they choose, every one following the dictates of his fancy or of his pocket. Every Bashibozook private is allowed by the Government a salary of seventy-two piastres (13*s.* 6*d.* English money) per month. Besides this he receives two loaves of bread a day for his ration. This is the official organization as it is marked down in black and white. If we look, however, into the way it works, we will find quite a different state of things. First of all, it must be said that of all those nice things which Government heaps with profusion on the heads of the happy Bashibozooks, bread is the only thing which reaches their mouths in a tolerably good state of preservation. As for their seventy-two piastres of pay, only a very small fraction of it ever finds its way into the pocket of the lawful owner. The scale of subtraction goes on thus: for the sergierdeh, so much; for the captain, so

much; for general expenses, so much; extraordinary expenses, again, so much; for the common mass, so much; balance for Mr. Bashibozook, twelve piastres and ten paras (about 1*s.* 9*d.* of our money). Thus there is no great danger that our friend the Bashibozook should contract extravagant habits through his pay.

As a matter of course, the sum of all these subtractions accumulates in the chests of the sergierdeh and of his assistants, but only to leave there some little deposit, as the wealthy substance flows quickly thence to fill up the chasms which exist in the private budgets of some Pasha, or of some director of the commissariat. It is essential to know that these great benefits are not merely realized by a subtraction of some piastres from the pay; hundreds and hundreds of men also are subtracted from the rolls by a magic stroke of the pen. A sergierdeh who has received a commission for a thousand men is sure not to have in flesh and bones more than four hundred: the rations and money of the six hundred go of course into the pocket of his associates.

When the Pashas or other commanding officers under whose orders the corps of Bashibozooks is placed wish to extort some money from the chief of the band, the method to which they have recourse is this. They send some one to inspect the corps and to report on the state of its effective strength. The chiefs of the

Bashibozooks affect to be alarmed by the arrival of such an indiscreet visitor, and immediately enrol all the peasants they can get hold of in the neighbourhood and show them to the inspector as genuine Bashibozook veterans. Of course the inspector sees through the manœuvre, but he affects short-sightedness, provided the payment of a good round sum is brought to bear on the question.

Amongst the numerous subjects of the Sultan, the Albanians may be considered as the privileged race which serves to fill the ranks of the Bashibozooks. These people are induced to embrace such a vocation by the love of adventure and a mania for the life of a knight-errant. Born in the mountainous region which borders to the north the Hellenic peninsula, the Albanian finds that the valleys and ravines which serve him as a cradle offer too circumscribed an horizon to a career the object of which is plunder, lawlessness, and excitement. Scarcely has he attained the age of puberty when off he starts from his native land either for trading purposes, or in order to follow the fortunes of some *condottiere*. This Albanian emigration is carried on on a large scale, and is divided into two streams, one flowing periodically, with the reversion of seasons, from Albania to Constantinople, Salonica, Smyrna, Alexandria, and other points of the Turkish dominions. Those who follow this tide

are exclusively costermongers, servants, and other similar classes who work from spring to autumn, and live on their earnings during the winter season. The other stream of emigration pours forth almost exclusively the Bashibozook element, which spreads wide and broad all over Turkey, from Yemen to Ararat, and from the borders of the Sava to the mouth of the Danube. The famous Mehemet-Ali of Egypt was himself nothing but one of these Albanian Bashibozooks, who went to try his fortune in the land of the Pharaohs. He began as a private, and, step by step, became captain, then chief of a band, sergierdeh, afterwards commander of all the forces established in the country, and at last viceroy.

The qualities which distinguish the Albanian Bashibozook are his agility and courage, his endurance of the fatigues and privations inseparable from warfare. His vices represent the two extremes of human character; he is either the greatest miser under the sun, or the most liberal amongst men—there is no medium between the two. I had under my orders a captain of the name of Said-Agha, whose stinginess was pushed to such a point that, if a man were to die of starvation by his side, he would undoubtedly turn his head in the other direction, so as to avoid helping the dying man with a penny. Such fellows as Said are sure to make a fortune in the long run; and then it is beyond human

power to prevent the enriched Albanian from returning to his native land. There he retires at last, laden with years and money, and the first thing he does is to marry a pretty girl some thirty and odd years younger than himself.

The Albanian Bashibozook, of dissipated and profligate habits, knows no limits to the satisfaction of his passions. Drinking *raki* the whole night, gambling, rioting, and plundering, are his ordinary and favourite pastimes. Once they lose every penny they have, the Bashibozooks, in order to procure new resources, take to cheating and even murdering. Murders, however, are not very frequent occurrences with these fellows, so long as threats and the bastinado are means sufficient to insure to them the free exercise of their disorderly habits.

Ismail-Agha, the commander of my Bashibozooks, was a man of this sort. He had volunteered to serve in Koordistan at the epoch when the Porte had sent an army there in order to subdue the semi-independent Koordish chiefs, Khan Mahmud, Abdullah Bey, and others. Since then (1847), Ismail had remained in the country, with his detachment of three or four hundred men, watching several points of the frontier, and taking a part in the politics and fights of the Koords. Bringing his might to bear sometimes on one side of the scale, sometimes on the other, the Albanian chief had succeeded in asserting his

authority, not forgetting, however, to appropriate to himself the lion's share of plunder.

This artful policy was, however, one of the means by which Ismail managed to amass a good sum of money. Another, and by far the surest, was that of having upon paper four hundred men, while the effective strength of his corps did not count more than two hundred. By this process, the pay and rations of one moiety was quietly pocketed by himself and his captains. Of course, the authorities at head-quarters were fully aware of what was going on; but such a state of things does not seem to have been quite distasteful to them, as all the inspectors whom they sent used to arrange matters by coming to a compromise with Ismail, and went back in high spirits, perfectly satisfied, no doubt, with the consideration which had induced them to allow him to go on in the system of deceit which he had adopted.

When the inspection took place the curious manœuvre already mentioned was employed to fill up the deficiency in the ranks. Ismail used to despatch a lot of emissaries for the purpose of hastily recruiting as many peasants as were requisite to fill up the chasms. Two or three pence was a bait tempting enough to induce a troop of clumsy and lazy fellows to enlist as Bashibozooks for a term of twenty-four hours. These productions of Koordistan passed thus as genuine Albanians—the veterans of Ismail.

An inspector who had been sent from headquarters happened once, it is said, to stop before one of these temporary Bashibozooks, and asked him whether he really was "Hassan of Elbassan" (in Albania), whose name had just been called out. On receiving an affirmative answer to that effect, "Well," added the inspector, "could you tell me what sort of place is Elbassan, your native place?"—"No," was the short reply of the Koord. "How is it possible," said the inspector, "that you should not know the place of your birth?"—"I am from the district of Elbassan," quickly replied the Koord, "and not from the town itself. I have been in the town, but then it was night-time when I was there, so that I could not see anything."

The joke had the merit of being an ingenious one, especially as the Koord, with his swarthy countenance and thick eyebrows, had little of the Albanian about him. The inspector feigned, however, to be satisfied, as he knew it would have been useless for him to remonstrate against such an abuse.

This system is everywhere in vigour among the Bashibozooks enrolled under the banner of Turkey. It is evident that scandalous depredations of the sort could not be perpetrated with impunity if the central administration did not connive at them. Of course the transaction must turn out to be highly profitable for all those who dip their fingers into it. As for

Ismail, twenty-five or thirty years' practice of this trade had rendered him a real Crœsus. The wealth which he had accumulated was enough to elevate him to the high standing of a millionaire of Koordistan.

Ismail was not allowed, however, to remain long the happy proprietor of his riches, as a conspiracy was soon set on foot to take everything from him. The means which the Koords employed for the realization of their scheme was highly ingenious. A beautiful girl of sixteen was the agent through whom old Ismail's fortune was to be appropriated. Her father proposed the match one day to Ismail as a most suitable one, and the old bachelor fell into the trap, becoming a bridegroom at fifty and some odd years. From that moment he was a doomed man, as the young wife brought with her an army of relations, connexions, and friends, who one and all at once commenced a system of plunder. Two years were enough to complete their design, and at the end of that period old Ismail was conveyed under ground as poor as he had been when he first started on his adventures.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Shikiak and the Milan Tribes—Their Feuds—Omer-Agha—Koordish Tactics—Emigration to Persia—Death of Omer—Return of the Milans—Attack on the Milans—Negotiations at Serai—Punishment inflicted on the Chiefs.

WHEN I assumed the command of the troops stationed at Kotur and along the frontier, the country all around was in a very unsettled and agitated state. In order to give the reader an idea of what was going on at the time, it is necessary to say something with regard to the tribes which roam about the tract of territory comprised between Lake Van and the frontier. The area occupied by these tribes is some seventy English miles in length, and fifty in breadth.

Beginning at the north, the first tribe we meet* is the Takuru tribe, established in the proximity of Shemzeddin. The Takurus are neither numerous nor very warlike, and are therefore of little weight in the politics of the tribes. Next to them, going southward, comes the Muguru tribe, which musters about nine hundred tents. Through the skill and wealth of their chief, Ahmi, the Mugurus succeed always in playing an important part in the affairs of the coun-

* See the map.

try. Further to the south, in the mountainous districts, are the Shikiaks, subdivided into four different tribes, who are distinguished from each other by the names of their respective chiefs. Those now within the limits of the area I am describing are the Shikiaks, commanded by Keur Omer, a desperate character, who had enlisted under his flag the worst elements he could find in Koordistan. By this means he had mustered around him an imposing force of a thousand tents, with which he stirred up the whole of the country.

The Milan tribe occupied the territory of Setmaniss, a fertile district enclosed within the possessions held by the other tribes. This central position of the Milans afforded them a fair opportunity of fighting their different neighbours single-handed, and of thus asserting their ascendancy over them. The Milans having become the most influential amongst the tribes, their opponents formed an alliance with the avowed object of re-establishing the balance of power. Does not this state of things look very much like a miniature model of the political edifice of our European world, where the dread of French, Russian, or Prussian ascendancy gives rise to holy alliances and mighty struggles? Yes; humanity blindly obeys the same laws all over the world, and similar instincts and interests bring about the same results.

It was in 1860 that this offensive alliance was con-

cluded, with the main object of bringing about the complete destruction of the Milans, whose forces were to be crushed, and their lands wrested from their hands. It was agreed that, the Milan territory once taken possession of, the Shikiaks should receive it as an indemnity for the property which they had abandoned at Elbagh, their former residence. The allies were the Mugurus, the Shikiaks, and the Takurus, whose united forces amounted to two thousand five hundred horse. Though the allied tribes had so far succeeded in securing the odds on their side, opposing two thousand five hundred men to the sixteen hundred of the Milans, yet the intrepidity of Omer-Agha, the Milan chief, and the warlike spirit of his troops, showed the allies the necessity of giving additional strength to their hostile combination by soliciting the support of the Government. With this view Ahmi, as a skilful diplomatist, entered into negotiation with Ismail Pasha, at that epoch Governor of Van, promising to augment the tribute which the Milans were in the habit of paying, making at the same time some very alluring offers which he knew very well no Turk would ever think of rejecting. By this deeply conceived scheme Ahmi expected to gain the object of his ambition—viz., the undisputed supremacy over the other tribes, together with a rich booty from the spoils of the enemy.

When the interests of two parties coincide on one point, negotiations are soon concluded, and nothing then remains but to come to an understanding with regard to the measures most suitable to insure success. In this particular case Ahmi had nothing to do but to bring about a rupture between the authorities and their enemy, an event which would offer him a fair opportunity to take the side of the former, and march with them against their foe. This crafty combination received the approval of the authorities at Van, whose policy makes them eagerly seek every possible expedient by which they can throw disunion and foment feuds amongst the tribes. *Divide et impera* is the old maxim which serves as a rule to the Turks in their relations with the different nations placed within the sphere of their power. According to this policy, nothing could more satisfactorily forward their interests than to see the Koordish tribes devour each other.

In the execution of this plan, having the ruin of the Milans for its object, one difficulty was to be encountered, and that was to find a plausible pretext for opening hostilities. After much trouble a plan was devised which answered all purposes. The Pasha of Van resolved to act his own part in the plot by undertaking a visiting tour amongst the tribes, upon whom he was to enforce the full adoption of the system of conscription, at the same time exacting pay-

ment of a series of new taxes. All the chiefs were, as a matter of course, summoned to appear before the Pasha, who was to treat as a rebel anyone who would not pledge himself to obey his injunctions. Ahmi and the other chiefs were to play into the Governor's hands by feigning to reject such onerous propositions, and declaring themselves ready to revolt if Omer-Agha, the chief of the Milans, would put himself at their head. The conspirators knew almost to a certainty that the chivalrous spirit which animated Omer would lead him to accept the proposal, and that he would not hesitate to take the lead of a national movement in order to withstand the pretensions of the Pasha. When Omer had so far compromised himself, the other chiefs were to retire from the fictitious league, submitting themselves unconditionally to the orders of the Governor. The Pasha was then to march against the Milans for the purpose of expelling them from Turkish territory, and throw them upon the Persian frontier.

The success which attended the execution of this preconceived plan fully justified the expectations of those from whom it had originated. The Pasha went to Mahmudieh, the spot appointed for the general meeting. The chiefs rejected his propositions, and a simulated rebellion ensued, in which Omer-Agha was the only one who was in earnest. Soon, however, finding himself abandoned by his

supposed associates, he was compelled to fall back on his own resources. The Pasha, together with the allies, did not lose any time in carrying out operations against the Milans, whom he attacked the following day. The hostile forces were soon in presence of each other, and the engagement would have begun almost immediately, had it not been for an able manœuvre of Omer-Agha, who deferred the shock by retreating before the advancing enemy. It was in the plain of Serai that the contending forces were manœuvring, Omer's object being that of finding a position within easy reach of the frontier, whence, the retreat of his camp and flocks once achieved, he might turn against his aggressors and give them battle.

The action began in a regular way, by sending out several detachments of light horse, who opened the fighting by advancing from both sides while skirmishing with their fire-arms. After a short interval, the two lines advanced, trotting from a distance of about seven hundred yards from each other. The shock was followed by a hand-to-hand fight, in which both sides fought bravely, making use of their lances and swords.

While the struggle was thus going on in the centre, the Shikiaks, led by their chief Keur Omer, wheeled round, threatening to surround the left wing of the Milans. But Omer, who had had the precaution to keep in reserve a select body of horsemen, made an

attack on the centre, and with the rapidity of lightning pierced through the troops of the Mugurus, killed with his own hand the eldest son of Ahmi, and put to flight both the Mugurus and the Takurus. The rout of the centre and right of the allies obliged the Shikiaks and the Pasha of Van to seek their own safety, and compelled them to fall back on their position, thus leaving Omer master of the field. Profiting by the respite which the routing of the enemy afforded him, the Milan chief continued his retreating movement, and succeeded in crossing the frontier unmolested by his adversaries.

This account of the action which took place between the Milans and their enemies serves to show to what extent the knowledge of warfare is spread amongst these wild Koords, who evidently, either through instinct or tradition, possess some notions of tactics of a standard far above that which is to be met with amongst the Red Indians or the Maories. It must be said, first of all, that cavalry constitutes the principal arm of the Koords, as was formerly the case with their ancestors, the Parthians. Infantry is little thought of, though this arm is found in the mountainous regions of Hakkiari, and in some districts in the governments of Revanduz and Suleimanieh.

The qualities which distinguish the cavalry of the

Koords are great agility and suppleness, together with an almost inconceivable power of enduring hardships and fatigue. With respect to evolutions, all that the Koords know is skirmishing, the attack being made with disorderly masses. In the beginning of an action they endeavour to extend themselves in a line, in order to avoid being outflanked; but this line is so irregular, that in some parts it is only one deep, while in others it reaches a depth of three, four, and even ten ranks. Of course the advantage of intervals in the line of battle is completely unknown to them. A second line also seems to be considered by them as superfluous. Such being the case, one cannot expect that they should have ever heard of formations by *échelons* or *en échiquier*. The Koords know, however, as has already been remarked, the way of employing reserves. In marching order they go just as they please, without any regularity whatsoever. While marching, or when encamped, they know well how to guard themselves from a surprise. Few scouts and vedettes can reconnoitre the ground so thoroughly as the Koords are in the habit of doing.

Let us now resume the thread of the narrative, and relate what happened to the Milans after they had been expelled from the Turkish territory. Upon setting his foot on Persian soil, Omer-Agha was very warmly

greeted by the authorities of the country, who did not fail to receive him with all the honours due to a chief of his repute and standing. *Khilats*, garments of honour, several specimens of fine weapons, and other such presents, were at once showered upon him as well as upon the principal members of his family and tribe. The Persian Shah-zadeh made many promises, in virtue of which the Milan tribe was to consider itself as possessing already all the available lands of the country. But there his generosity stopped, and he began to manifest an undue degree of curiosity to become acquainted with the amount of cash which the Milans had brought with them.

Cross-examination, persuasions, and threats having failed to induce Omer to hand over his money, the Persian Governor thought it advisable to have recourse to measures of coercion, by which he expected to compel the Koord to say where his money and jewels were to be found. Omer, however, was not the man to give in so easily, especially on a question so momentous as that of delivering up his treasures. His obstinacy having excited more and more the cupidity and wrath of the Shah-zadeh, he gave orders that Omer, together with several of his followers, should be subjected to a process of torture so exquisite that it would soon be effectual in forcing from them the whole truth. The Koords, however, sustained the tortures with unflinching firmness,

resigning themselves to have their eyes pulled out rather than satisfy the lust of a tyrant! Having gone so far, the Shah-zadeh thought it better to get rid of people who might one day be able to revenge their wrongs, and Omer and his men were beheaded.

After the death of their leader, the Milans became the prey of the Persian officials, who not only extorted all that could be got out of them, but subjected them also to frequent and abundant bastinadoings, with imprisonment and other such amenities. The poor Milans must have bitterly repented having exchanged the Turkish for the Persian territory, and must undoubtedly have wished to return to their former quarters but for fear of their own countrymen. The difference, however, which the Milans might perceive between the two masters, was that the one did with his own hands what the other accomplished through the agency of some one else. If the Shah-zadeh delighted in cutting off the heads of Milans with his own scimitar, the Turkish Pasha found it more convenient to make the Koords cut each others' throats.

Complete destruction being the only prospect which the Milans saw before them by prolonging their sojourn in Persia, they applied to the new Pasha of Van, a Koord like themselves, requesting that their former territory of Setmaniss, or at least a portion of it, should be given back to them. Resul Pasha

acceded willingly to their demand, and granted them permission to enter the domains of the Sultan; but no sooner had the poor Milans crossed the frontier than the allies, Shikiaks, Mugurus, &c., all rose up in arms and attacked them. Though the Milans had the worst in the engagement which ensued, their enemies were nevertheless baffled in their purpose, as they failed to drive them back beyond the frontiers.

It was in the midst of this hurly-burly that I took the command of the troops, whose duty was to guard the frontier and watch the movements of the neighbouring tribes. The special instructions which I received from head-quarters, on this occasion, were to the effect that I should endeavour to prevent any conflict from taking place between the rival tribes, leaving it to my discretion to employ compulsion if necessary.

The first step which I took in compliance with these orders was to despatch an officer to each of the four tribes, with the intimation that they were not to cause any more disturbances, as I would immediately march against those who should first break the peace. Of the four tribes only one seemed to be moved by my threats—that of the Milans, who hastened to send a deputation to the camp, in order to give me assurance of their loyalty and to seek protection. As for the others, they thought it better to take no notice of my

warning, being fully confident that, backed as they were by the civil authorities of Van, they should always be beyond my reach.

It is necessary here to explain this anomalous state of things, which creates a new complication in the midst of a variety of others, by saying something with reference to the different views entertained on this question by the military and civil authorities of the province. The rivalry and disagreement which existed between the two hostile Koordish factions had its parallel in the discrepancy of views and opposition of interests which separated the members of the civil administration from the officers in command. The administration was body and soul devoted to the Shikiaks, because its members had their finger in the pie when the territory of the Milans was given to the former. It was naturally expected that if justice was done, and the Milans were reinstated in their rights, the Shikiaks and their allies would demand back the money, as well as the presents of *djadjk*, which they had given right and left. The civil authorities, therefore, could not avoid supporting their associates through thick and thin.

The army, on the other hand, unanimously supported the Milans, for this reason, that if the civil authorities had left them to themselves the tribes would have gone on destroying each other till nothing would have been left of them but their tails, as

in the well-known instance of the Kilkenny cats. The civilians showed themselves extremely jealous of the military, and would by no means allow them to interfere, fearing lest the profits of a good harvest should be taken from them. The antagonistic feeling which exists everywhere throughout Turkey between the two branches of the administration had naturally a great influence in causing this divergence of views; but in this instance self-interest or the thirst for lucre was of paramount importance with this gang of administrators.

As for ourselves, military men, we could unquestionably boast of being thoroughly disinterested in our views with respect to the politics of the country. The supposition that, had we had a chance of promoting our own interests in any way, we would have done it, is gratuitous, though admissible. Judging of facts as they actually were, and not as they might have been, it must be acknowledged that, from the commander-in-chief down to the last of my soldiers, we were all honest sympathizers with the Milans. Personally I was something more than a sympathizer, I was their declared friend. That was wrong very likely, because, according to high authorities in politics, men should have no heart, and in affairs of state a father should even be ready to kill his own son without a single sob, if necessary to do so. I was weak on that point, it is true; but I could not

help feeling for the poor Milans who were persecuted, while I hated the blood-hounds who were eagerly seeking their destruction. My sentiments being known to the Shikiaks and the other allies, they declined to listen to my summons, and kept a hostile attitude in spite of my advice and remonstrances.

Besides this, as I was quite a stranger, unknown to the Koordish public, it was but natural that the weight of my opinion should not be very great in their affairs. My rather youngish looks had also the effect of lowering me in the estimation of the Koords, who at once gave me the nickname of the "boy-major." They were not long, however, in finding out their mistake, and my first nickname was soon transformed by them, unjustly also, into that of "Kurt Kiran,"—"the destroyer of Koords."

In the expectation that fresh disturbances would soon take place, I resorted to what I considered the best means of keeping myself thoroughly informed of what was going on, while, on the other hand, I made everything ready for any event which might suddenly occur. With a view of obtaining the freshest news and the best intelligence possible, I dispatched, where they were needed, spies, like disguised soldiers, genuine Koords and Nestorians. Owing to these measures, whatever happened in the

Koordish camps was instantly reported to me, while I was ready to march wherever it might be requisite at a moment's notice.

These advantages, though essential, were, however, merely secondary when compared with those derived from the position which my troops occupied in relation to the Koordish tribes. A march of five hours, through well protected defiles, would enable us to appear in the midst of the disturbed districts, or to fall separately upon any of the tribes it might become necessary to chastise. While I was weighing the chances of success offered by my strategic plans, just as if I had been on the eve of opening a serious campaign, the mediators from Van—the civilians—were trying to effect a compromise between the hostile tribes. This undertaking was, however, a difficult one, as it was by no means easy to induce the allies to give back to the Milans the sheep and the other property which they had seized as booty during the last engagement. To come to an understanding in such cases is exceedingly difficult, as, if one side is inclined to surrender the half, the other claims immediately the double.

In this interval, the Pasha of Van decided to effect the pacification of the country by giving a vigorous impulse to the negotiations, and for that purpose a man of great repute amongst the Koords, the well-known Dervish Bey, whom I have had already the

opportunity of mentioning in one of the previous chapters, was selected. Dervish Bey left Van and repaired to the camp of the Milans, where a general assembly was held, ostensibly with the view of conciliating matters, but really for the sole purpose of allowing the Bey to fill his pockets with as much plunder as he could collect. Having received information about this assembly, I hastened to act in compliance with the instructions received from the Commander-in-Chief, by sending Omer-Agha, lieutenant to the first company, with the power of representing the military authority in the assembly.

It will now be seen how, out of this incident, arose a series of struggles and plenty of excitement; but it is a curious fact that, while I was expecting that the spark would be kindled in the midst of the tribes, it was we who set fire to the powder.

The appearance of my envoy in the midst of the council threw a gloom over the sanguine expectations of those who thought they had a fair opportunity of inclining the balance to their side. These were evidently the allies, and Dervish Bey, their supporter, who saw that their plans were baffled. The Milans, on the contrary, hailed the arrival of the lieutenant as that of an angel from heaven who had come to their assistance. The allies, in the meantime, having concluded that the step which I had taken would inevitably neutralize their action, for the very reason that it was meant to

serve as an encouragement to the weak, decided to carry their point anyhow, even at the risk of playing a bold game. Accordingly, without much ceremony, they intimated to my lieutenant that his presence was not required by the assembly, and he might as well return whence he had come. After a few minutes, seeing that Omer-Agha persisted in remaining where he was, they actually got hold of him by the arm and turned him out of the tent.

Omer reached the camp at night and informed me of all that had occurred, with many expressions of indignation at the disgraceful treatment to which he had been obliged to submit. Fully sharing his indignation, I should at once have marched out in order to avenge the honour of the uniform, which had been so grossly attacked by those villains, but reason prevailed over the impulse of the moment, and I decided to wait till the next day, to see what was to be done in such an emergency. Experience, in this instance, plainly justified the maxim that procrastination is often the best policy, as by temporizing I was enabled to follow the course best suited to obtain full satisfaction for the insult received.

On the following morning I summoned all the officers of the regiment to a council, in which the question was discussed and the opinion of everyone heard. Of course they unanimously declared that the matter

could not be allowed to pass without taking a legitimate revenge, as it was evident that if such an outrage were allowed to remain unpunished, the prestige of the military among the tribes would receive a fatal blow. After having thus ascertained the opinion of my officers, the assembly was dissolved, and I set to work to devise the best plan for carrying my object into execution. What I resolved upon was to fall unexpectedly on the tribes with a flying column of picked men, seize the culprits, and inflict upon them a punishment which they would not be likely to forget.

Before night fresh intelligence from the Koords was received. Dervish Bey, suspecting, it appears, that something might happen which would interfere with his schemes, had hastened to induce the chiefs to accept a kind of compromise. A partial restitution of the booty lately taken from the Milans formed the basis of this arrangement. It was settled that the delivery of the property should be effected on the following day, and the village of Seraï was fixed upon as the spot where the convention should be put into execution. Nothing could be more propitious for the realization of my projected *coup de main* than this circumstance; and I could have hoped for nothing better than to get all the chiefs together in a village far from their respective tribes.

On the following day, having ascertained that the

chiefs, together with Dervish Bey, had made their entry into Serai, I formed a flying column, a hundred and twenty strong, which was placed under the command of one of the captains, with orders to effect a night march on Serai. Before reaching that place, at five in the morning, the captain was to wait for further instructions. All possible precautions were to be taken by this officer, in order to conceal his movements from the natives. A second detachment received the order to place itself *en échelon* at half distance between Serai and our camp.

At two in the morning I left the camp, escorted by twenty mounted bashibozooks. Following the route by which the column had gone, I made my junction, about five o'clock, with its commander, who was waiting for my arrival, concealed with his detachment in a hollow site close by the road. I then led the troop towards the village, my object being to find a suitable spot where I might put it in ambuscade till the favourable moment for taking an active part should arrive. A little elevation situated at a distance of six hundred yards to the east of Serai being admirably suited for the purpose of concealing the detachment, I posted my men there, enjoining them to remain carefully concealed till a concerted signal made from the roof of one of the houses should indicate to them that they were to rush on the village.

These arrangements made, I trotted towards the village, where scarcely anyone was to be seen out of doors. The Koords, being thoroughly heated by politics, had early begun their squabbles. Before entering the house where the assembly was sitting, I took the following steps as measures of precaution. First, I ordered that four men should be posted at the doors of the different stables where the chiefs and their escorts kept their horses. My men were to shut the door of the stable from the inside, thus preventing anyone from getting his horse and running away. The importance of this measure can be understood when one takes into account the fact that a Koord on foot is a very inert being, his voluminous and heavy trousers (shalvar), his clumsy red boots, and his imposing mantle almost preventing him from stirring. On foot, a Koordish chief is no better than a man in a sack. By preventing them from getting on their horses, I evidently rendered it impossible for them to offer any resistance. The other measure to which I resorted was that of putting a sentry on the roof of the house where the assembly was, in order to correspond by signals with the detachment.

Everything being ready, I made my entry, accompanied by four or five men, into the dark hall, in which I found a number of Koords crammed together, chiefs and attendants forming but one promiscuous

and confused mass. My sudden apparition in the midst of them produced a sensation which revealed itself by the agitation visible in their countenances and movements. As for Dervish, his face turned almost yellow, while his eyes had that black ominous shade which is generally the sign of a violent rage. The Bey, and all who were there, rose and greeted my arrival with that courtesy which Orientals seldom neglect, especially when in contact with persons who can exact their deference.

The air of defiance which was glaring both in my countenance and gestures, soon put a stop to the diplomatic noddings with which I was greeted at first, and the keen Koords understood that my unexpected call was not quite a friendly one. Breaking the silence which had followed my arrival, I questioned the assembly respecting their apparent zeal to arrange matters, while, on the other hand, they were filling the country with their intrigues and disorders. Then turning towards Dervish, I added, "Well, with such a peace-maker as this, you are sure, my good Koords, to find peace and happiness here below." A broken conversation of this sort went on during the space of an hour, I suppose, in a rather acrimonious tone, in the course of which I repeatedly insisted on being informed of the names of those who had insulted my lieutenant. All my efforts, however, to make them

avow their guilt were of little avail. The Koords denied completely the truth of the statement, and said they did not know anything about it. This bold denial was accompanied by a chorus of oaths, in which every member of the assembly swore falsely without the least remorse or shame.

While we were thus pulling in two opposite directions, the Koords continuing to deny, and I trying to get an avowal from their lips, a man rushed into the room in a most excited state and uttered one or two words in Koordish, which, like electric sparks, produced instantaneously a violent outbreak in the midst of the assembly. The gloomy hall became in a moment the scene of an awful uproar. Everyone, old and young, chief and attendant, rose, seizing their swords, pistols, or lances. In the midst of this panic, with one bound I reached the door, where several of my men were standing. We then rushed all together out of the house, and quickly climbed on the roof, whence the white flag gave the column the signal to advance. The Koords instantly followed us, rushing into the open space, and ran towards the stables to get their horses out; but in a few minutes the troops had entered the village and formed themselves in front of the house.

I immediately summoned the chiefs and Dervish Bey to put an end to the struggle which had begun at the doors of the stables, or I declared I could

not be answerable for the lives of any who showed themselves refractory. This threat did not fail to re-establish order, and my Albanians succeeded in securing the horses, notwithstanding the attempts made to force an entrance or to remove the roofs. Dervish Bey, with the chiefs of the Mugurus and of the Takurus, accompanied by some of their attendants, advanced towards me, and assuming a submissive attitude, declared through their mouth-piece, Dervish, that they were willing to obey my orders, provided I would let them know what I required from them. Their curiosity was soon satisfied; and, in reply to their question, I presented to them Omer-Agha, the lieutenant they had dared to kick out of their tents, handing them at the same time a list of the names of the culprits whose immediate surrender I required.

It would scarcely be possible for me to sketch graphically enough the various expressions visible at that moment on the countenances of these fellows, especially when they saw themselves face to face with Omer-Agha. Rage, spite, despondency, the strongest passions of the human soul, glared in the faces of the assembled Koords. The proud Dervish Bey was so excited that he seemed to be labouring under a spasmodic fit. Such demonstrations were, however, of little use, as I was determined to

show the Koords and their supporters that the bayonet can maintain its rights. After a short pause and a little hesitation, the men I demanded were brought forward and placed in a line before the troops. Amongst them were the sons of two chiefs and some of the elders of the tribes, altogether seven individuals.

I ordered them to fall one by one to the ground before the lieutenant and kiss his toes. This satisfaction, due to Omer-Agha personally, once obtained, I next commanded the culprits to pass before the line, in the midst of the hootings of the soldiers. This performance was punctually executed, and did not fail to produce the effect which I expected from it. It was a humiliating proceeding, which stung the Koords to the very heart, even more than the bastinado which followed next, serving as the winding up of the piece, though administered without losing sight either of moderation or justice. Fifty was the dose prescribed, and that only for those who had deserved an extra punishment—that is to say, the two amongst the culprits who had actually put their hands on the person of Omer-Agha.

While this was taking place, and the Koords were reaping the fruits of their own arrogance, Dervish Bey, the versatile diplomatist, took to his heels, leaving the negotiations and the tribes in my

hands. His escape was very well managed, as no one perceived him while taking out his horses or riding out of the village. This event had some importance, inasmuch as it was meant to be a kind of protest from the civil authorities against the intrusion of the military. Such considerations, and the fear of what the authorities might say or do, were not quite the things with which I was going to preoccupy myself at that moment. Seeing, therefore, that the duty abandoned by the runaway deputy devolved now on those who had taken the reins into their own hands, I undertook, conjointly with the aide-de-camp of the general, who had been despatched to the spot, to bring to a conclusion the pending negotiations.

This difficulty, which it was necessary to overcome, consisted of making the Milans accept that portion of their property which their enemies were willing to restore to them. The Milans were still determined to accept nothing short of what had been taken from them. Thus, while one side was leaning on might and the other on right, all the efforts of Dervish do not seem to have settled the difficulty in any way. When I, however, took the affair in hand the state of things was changed entirely and the question was established on a new basis. The Milans, who, previous to my arrival, had been compelled to accept the conditions which their opponents offered them, now rejected all compromise which fell short of their demands.

I got over these difficulties and objections, however, as, through my influence with them, I induced the Milans to accept from me what was offered to them now. For any other claim which they might have, I advised them to be patient and hope for better luck in the future.

The negotiations were thus happily brought to an end before the night had set in. The allies were compelled to deliver into the hands of the Milans what they had already brought there. This consisted of several heads of cattle, together with carpets, mattresses, and some wallets containing articles of female toilette. Besides this, I succeeded in exacting an indemnity of several hundred pounds (gold pieces), which was paid down to the Milans. This was counted and delivered over to them, though they did not cease to grumble and shake their heads all the time this proceeding was being accomplished. At night the chiefs received permission to go about their business, as I was to remain at Serai, in company of the officers who had taken part in the expedition, and of some of the Koordish chiefs with whom I particularly wished to converse.

CHAPTER XV.

Fresh Disturbances—Encounter at Tchöl-tchemen—Bivouac—Tournament of the Milan Chiefs—Dance—Burial of a Warrior.

THE *coup de main* of Serai, and the way in which the negotiations had been brought to an end, inflamed the already too much excited minds of the allies. They had only yielded to compulsion, but had evidently not given up the game. Obviously the blow had been most fatal to their interests, as the punishment and humiliation inflicted upon them had helped to raise the Milans from the forlorn state to which they were reduced. The destruction of the Milans being the object of their enemies, whatever thwarted this end could not naturally be accepted by them with resignation. It is not surprising, then, that protests should have been launched from all quarters, and that clamours of indignation should have been raised against the interference of the military in the affairs of the province.

These complaints, however, were grounded on no principle of right, either civil or political, as it is clear that when two or three thousand men have the power

and desire of cutting each others' throats within a few hours' notice, it is absurd for them to appeal to the *Tanzimat* or to any other sort of constitutional right. While they themselves are constantly having recourse to the supreme law of the lance, the authorities have no other alternative left but that of throwing the code in one corner and employing the more effective law of the bayonet. Unfortunately the divisions which existed among those whose duty it was to enforce order gave rise to greater disorders, as not only the military were at drawn swords with the civil authorities, but these also were at variance among themselves. The good Resul Pasha, being opposed to the partial and crafty policy of his subordinates, leaned openly to the Milan side, without showing, however, that decision and firmness which subdues all opposition.

Emboldened by the support which they had received from the Pasha and from me, the Milans sent a deputation to Van shortly after the Serai affair, insisting on the immediate restitution of the territory of Setmaniss. This peremptory demand could not be interpreted by the allies in any other way but as a challenge, because the restitution of their land implied the expulsion of the intruders, the Shikiaks. The glove was, therefore, readily picked up by them, and hostilities were decided upon with a view of again expelling the Milans from the Turkish territory,

before the authorities could have decided either one way or another. The Koords, too, seem to be aware of the advantage of making the balance weigh on the side of *faits accomplis*. The thing once done is done, that's all.

In Koordistan a few hours are enough to put the country in a blaze. No declaration of war is necessary in a country where a continual state of warfare exists. Hostilities being expected every hour, the vedettes and sentries on both sides began to look sharper about them, spies crossed from camp to camp, and armed parties took to the entertainment of crossing the lance wherever they met. A first engagement took place between the shepherds and escorts of the belligerents at the bottom of a ravine, when both sides lost a few men. This encounter was the signal for a general rise, which not only spread throughout the country situated between Van and the frontier, but was communicated also to the other side, the Persian territory, where the Milans had many connexions and friends. Tribes that are akin to each other cling together as a rule, giving to each other mutual support. While the allies were mustering their forces and preparing an attack, the Milans endeavoured to strengthen themselves by inviting over their connexions established in Persia. Armed contingents poured in from all sides, from Maku, from the neighbourhood of Tebriz, and even

from the Russian frontier. The reports of the officers on detachment along the borders announced the apparition of numerous bands on many points of the Turkish territory.

In the midst of these movements, which clearly showed that the crisis was imminent, and hile wevents were rapidly succeeding each other, the news was brought all on a sudden that the allies were marching against the Milans, and that an engagement would undoubtedly take place before night. With a view to prevent any collision taking place before I could be able to reach the belligerents, I despatched an envoy to the Milans, enjoining them to evade a conflict if possible, as in the morning I should be on the plain of Tchöl-tchemen. An envoy was likewise sent to the allies in order to forbid them to advance any further. These preparatory measures once taken, with the approach of night I issued orders for raising the camp and for the formation of our marching order. The expedition was composed of the whole of the battalion, three hundred irregulars, and two howitzers.

The object of my march was the plain of Tchöl-tchemen, a high plateau situated due west from Kotur, at a distance of five hours and a half. By appearing on the plain early in the morning I calculated on falling into the midst of the belligerent tribes, preventing thus any effusion of blood from taking place. On leaving the camp, the column ascended the

valley of the Kotur river, marching silently with all the precautions required in effecting a night march. Towards daybreak we emerged from the defile in the plain of Tchöl-tchemen, which we found so completely covered with a thick fog as to prevent anyone from seeing further than a few yards. After having reconnoitred the ground as much as possible, I formed the full square and advanced towards the centre of the plain, while the Bashibozooks served as an *avant-garde* and flanking detachments.

The rays of the rising sun all on a sudden cleared away the mass of fog and disclosed to our eyes a scene which surprised even those who were accustomed to the excitements of a military life. Two large masses of cavalry made their appearance on our right and left, the glittering of their arms and the variety of their costumes producing an enchanting effect. Those to the right were the Milans, and those on the left were the Shikiaks with their allies. But if the surprise experienced in finding ourselves face to face with those we were searching produced in us feelings difficult to describe, what must have been the effect produced on the Koordish warriors in seeing a battalion with its glittering bayonets and well polished howitzers appear in the midst of them as by the power of the stroke of the magic cane? A wavering amongst their masses revealed clearly enough the emotion which was produced by the surprise, and this agitation

became still more visible by the galloping of horsemen, who rushed from one extremity of the lines to the other.

I could not but be highly pleased with the success which I had evidently obtained by my manœuvre, as the tribes had no chance left for beginning the battle which they would otherwise have fought. Anxious to clear the ground immediately, and to compel these warlike and restless folks to go back to their homes, I sent heralds to the two camps, summoning the chiefs to disband their contingents and to appear before me, in order to give explanations as to their conduct and assurances for their keeping peace in future. The chief of the Milans, Shekh Ali, was not long before he appeared, followed by a numerous suite. The explanations which he gave were most satisfactory. The old man declared himself ready to obey any orders which I might be pleased to give. My envoy who had gone to the Shikiaks soon came back, however, with a different kind of answer. Keur Omer declined haughtily to appear before me, and refused to disband his troops.

While these negotiations were carried on, and I was considering the steps which the refusal of the allies rendered it necessary for me to take, the troops of Keur Omer effected a retrograde movement, gaining ground to their right, that is, in the direction of Kotur. At first I did not attach any importance to this manœuvre, considering it as not worth noticing;

but half an hour had scarcely passed, when from the rear-guard I received information that a detachment of the allies had appeared on our rear, and had established itself at the entrance of the defile. There being no more doubt as to the intention of Keur Omer to cut off our line of retreat, I led the troops straight to the defile, enjoining at the same time the Milans to follow the column with their cavalry.

On approaching the defile, we were not a little surprised at finding a body of riflemen posted in a strong position, while a corps of cavalry had been placed close at hand to sustain it. An intimation was sent to the Koords to abandon at once the position, but the answer to this summons was a discharge from their rifles. The order was given to the artillery to shell the position, while the Bashi-bozooks, joined by the Milan cavalry, prepared themselves to storm it. The action once begun, the storming party climbed the rock in an instant and overcame all resistance. The conduct of the Milans would have excited the admiration of anyone. They actually climbed on the rock in a way that few of our European cavalry would ever dream of doing. A Tyrolese would scarcely have shown more agility and quickness. The position being taken, the Milans undertook to pursue the cavalry detachment, displaying the eagerness of bloodhounds and the rage of tigers. Some of their chiefs had thrown off their turbans,

and, holding the spear above their heads, were ready to pierce through the body any of their detested enemies. The opportunity of revenge was a splendid one, and every Milan was eager to kill two or three enemies at least. The losses of the Shikiaks that day amounted to twenty-five killed, and some twenty prisoners, whom we had the greatest difficulty to rescue from the hands of the Milans. They would undoubtedly have eaten them up if they had had a chance.

After having received this well-deserved punishment, the Shikiaks soon disappeared and retired to their encampment, from whence they despatched a deputation to Van, imploring protection and vengeance. As for us, after having buried the dead, we took position at Enghis, a village situated on a ridge which separates the two plains of Tchöl-tchemen and Serai. There I awaited further instructions in order to know what should be done. At evening we established our bivouac. However, before the arrival of night, the Milans, who were in very high spirits, entertained us with a series of tournaments, in which they displayed the most admirable horsemanship. Those who took part in them were of course the most renowned horsemen of the country. Amongst them the most conspicuous was a certain Dirbas, who had served in the Russian light cavalry, with the rank of captain. The feats achieved by this horseman with

the lance or the sword would be a treat to anyone, even to European equestrians and soldiers.

Our bivouac that night turned out a regular festival. The soldiers were delighted at having had some excitement; and as for the Milans, they abounded in the most exhilarating humour. Besides, a splendid moonlight enlivened the surrounding scenery, while the bright fires of the bivouac served to add to the joviality of the mixed groups of Koords and soldiers who stood by them. The regimental band having begun to perform some martial airs, numbers of soldiers and Koords gathered there, forming a circle round it. No sooner, however, did the music commence to play one of the Koordish tunes, than immediately the Koords formed a regular circle, and began to execute their national dance. The Koordish dance deserves to be described, as it offers some peculiarities which I have not remarked in other Oriental dances.

One peculiarity in the manner of dancing of the Koords is, that they never dance separately, or by twos or by fours. They begin by forming a circle, in which every one takes his place by separating two partners, between whom he remains tight shoulder to shoulder. The most remarkable peculiarity consists in this, that while in every other part of the world the individual who dances agitates more or less violently his members, the Koord remains almost motionless, executing a very slight movement with his knees.

The Koords accomplish no extraordinary performance, but there is a soft, undulating movement of the whole circle, in harmony with the music, just like a mass of corn gently moving when set in motion by a mild breeze. When dancing the Koordish warrior affects the most sentimental and romantic expression that he can possibly give to his countenance. From their looks one would expect to see all the dancers faint from the effects of some powerful internal passion; but the dance once over, they are all right again, no more in love than before.

What is surprising in the dances of the Koords is the fact that they do not object to have lady-partners. On the contrary, they seem to have a peculiar liking for dancing with their sweethearts. When the Koords dance amongst themselves each dancer takes his girl by his side, and puts himself shoulder to shoulder with her. Then the circle is composed of as many men as there are women. I regret never to have seen such a sight, but the Koords do those things amongst themselves, far from the dangerous glances of Turks and soldiers.

One of the customs of the Koords which very much resembles that prevalent in Europe, is the funeral ceremony performed in honour of a dead warrior or chieftain. On such an occasion special invitations are sent to the chiefs of the friendly tribes, and to all those who are related to the defunct by ties of consanguinity.

At the appointed hour everyone hastens to the house from whence the funeral procession is to start. A certain number of horsemen open the procession, performing before the hearse a series of tournaments and evolutions. While this takes place at the head of the procession, the hearse is carried in the middle on the shoulders of the relations and friends of the deceased. Just behind the hearse follows at a slow step his charger, carrying on the empty saddle his arms and war costume. The procession is closed by an imposing mass of cavalry. The ladies, relatives and friends of the deceased, wear black veils as a sign of mourning. When the body is taken out of the house the women begin to cry and shriek most wildly, rending their clothes, and throwing, in sign of grief, handfuls of earth and dust on their heads.

This national institution of the Koords is the more surprising on account of its being utterly opposed to the principles of the Koran as well as to the prejudices of other Mussulman nations, who believe that death reduces all men to the same level, and that no more honour, therefore, is to be paid to a Sultan than to a porter.

THE END.

13, Great Marlborough Street.

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